

McCall

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second Class Entry at the N. Y. Post Office.

No. 200.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 17, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S LEAP. IN THE DARK; OR, ARIETTA AND THE UNDERGROUND STREAM.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



"It has got to be done!" cried Wild, nerving himself for the jump. "I don't know where I'll fetch up, but here goes!" Arietta uttered a scream as the young deadshot made his leap in the dark.

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Issued Weekly — By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second Class entry at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1906, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

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Arietta and the Underground Stream

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CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND TOMBSTONE TOM.

"Whoa, there! Look out, youngster! I come mighty near ridin' on top of you an' your sorrel nag. Jest git out of ther way, will yer? I'm Tombstone Tom, ther terror, an' I'm on a high old spree. I'd jest as leave eat yer up as not. Look out, there! I'm goin' ter make yer ride right up on that porch ter git out of my way!"

The speaker was a brawny man, conspicuous in a flaming red shirt. He was mounted on a bony mustang that was jumping about savagely under the pressure of the spurs that were attached to the rider's heels.

The remarks were addressed to a handsome, dashing young fellow, who was mounted upon a spirited sorrel stallion.

The boy had just reined in his steed in front of the Red Hot Tavern, in the mining camp called Hard Scratch, Arizona, when the reckless rider dashed up and tried to run him down.

Instead of becoming frightened at the manner of the man on the bony mustang, the boy simply turned his horse out of the way and smiled.

"Go it a little easy, my friend," he said, coolly. "If you don't I'll give you a dump!"

"You'll what!" roared Tombstone Tom, the terror, letting up on the spurs in his astonishment. "You young galoot, I want yer ter ride right up on that porch an' lead ther way ter ther bar! Do yer hear what I say?"

"I hear you," was the reply, "but I am not going to do it. You just keep away from me or you'll get hurt!"

The reckless man, who was under the influence of liquor, uttered an oath and then whipped out a six-shooter.

"Lead ther way inter ther bar-room, you young whelp!" he roared. "If yer don't do it I'll jump right on top of you an' your nag! I'm Tombstone Tom, an' my word is law around these diggin's."

Then the bony mustang reared up and plunged straight for the boy on the sorrel.

But both the boy and his mount knew their business.

There was a quick leap from the horse, an arm shot out like a piston and Tombstone Tom fell from the saddle and landed in a heap on the ground.

The mustang, relieved of the torment of the cruel spurs, dashed up the single street of Hard Scratch.

Before Tombstone Tom could make a move to get upon his feet the dashing looking young fellow was on the ground before him.

A quick kick sent the revolver flying from the man's hand, and then he was grabbed by the collar.

A low cry of astonishment went up from the dozen miners gathered about the door of the tavern as the boy lifted Tombstone Tom to his feet as easily as though he had been a child.

A sudden twist of his arms and the man whirled about two or three times and then went staggering across the road until he recovered his balance.

"Now then, you ugly looking galoot, if you are looking for a fight, come on! You have just got me in the humor to clean someone up, and you are the one I want to tackle!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he

sprang at the man and hit him a blow in the face with his right fist.

As Tombstone Tom staggered back another blow caught him, this time on the chin, and his head flew back as though his neck had been unjointed, and down he went in a sitting position in the sand.

A little old man with chin-whiskers, who had been standing on the porch of the tavern, took off his hat, and waving it over his head, shouted:

"Three cheers fur ther gamest boy what ever struck Hard Scratch, boys! He's knocked ther spots out of ther Terror, which is somethin' no man ever done yet! Hooray!"

Almost every man in the bunch joined in the cheering, and they would have all done it if it had not been that some were afraid of the drunken man, who had met his Waterloo in such a sudden manner.

Tombstone Tom, the Terror, was in no hurry to get up.

He sat there, looking around him in a dazed way.

But if he did not get up himself he was hustled to his feet, for the boy had not done with him yet.

Once more he felt an iron grip on his shirt collar and then again he was lifted to his feet.

"Have you got enough, my friend?"

The words were spoken as coolly as though the boy was simply asking an ordinary question.

"Wha—what?" stammered Tombstone Tom, looking at the boy and blinking like an owl in the sun.

"I asked you if you had enough. Didn't you understand what I said?"

"Did you hit me, you young——"

"Shut up! Don't call me any names! If you do I will thrash you so you won't know you're alive!"

But in spite of the fact that he had received such a rough handling, the reckless man was not satisfied.

He now flew into a terrible rage, and finding that his revolver was not in his belt, he drew an ugly looking knife and made a lunge at the boy.

If the point of the blade had landed where he wanted it to the boy would have dropped dying to the ground. But it did not.

A muscular left hand caught the villain by the wrist and a clenched right fist brought up against his mouth at the same time.

Spat!

"Wow! Oh, oh!"

The yell the Terror uttered was on account of a twist that his wrist received.

The knife dropped to the ground, and then——

Spat!

Another blow struck him in the face and down went the man in an unconscious condition.

Then the dashing looking boy coolly walked to where his horse was standing, and taking the animal by the bridle, led him to a hitching-post.

He did not tie him, but simply allowed the bridle rein to drop over the sorrel's head.

"How are you, gentlemen?" said the boy, smiling at the crowd. "I always have a way of speaking to strangers when I ride up, but I did not have the chance before, since that fellow dashed at me so suddenly. Is the landlord of the tavern here?"

"I reckon I'm ther galoot you're lookin' fur, boy," spoke up a red-faced man, stepping out and bowing. "I'm Jack Pepper, an' I keep ther swellest joint ever seen in a Arizony minin' camp. Do yer want ter put up here to-night?"

"Well, there is six in our party, not to speak of the two Chinamen we have got along as servants," replied the boy.

"Good! They kin be 'commodated here all right. But ther two heathens will have ter sleep on ther floor in ther back kitchen. Yer see, we've got a few boarders here jest now, an' though my shanty is ther biggest in ther camp, I can't find sleepin' 'commodations fur more'n twenty, an' then as many as six will have ter sleep in one room."

"Well, there are three ladies in our party, and if you can let them have a room I guess the rest of us can make out. If we can't do any better we'll sleep out of doors, the same as we are in the habit of doing the most of the time. When we strike a camp with a decent hotel in it we always feel like putting up at it, just for a change. I like the looks of your place, so I guess we'll stay here."

"Good! I like ther looks of you, too, an' yer kin bet your last dollar that you'll have no complaints ter make when yer leave here. Say, I'm jest tickled ter death over ther lickin yer jest give Tombstone Tom. How did yer do it, anyhow?"

"Wasn't you looking?"

"Yes, I was lookin', but yer sorter dazzled my eyes, yer moved so quick. Thunder! You're only a boy in looks, but yer act like half a dozen men when yer start in ter lick a galoot!"

The boy smiled at this remark.

Standing there in his neat-fitting hunting suit of buckskin, he certainly made a true picture of budding manhood.

He was about the average height, broad-shouldered and as supple as a willow.

A man in size, strength and agility, but a boy in years and looks.

A wealth of chestnut hair hung over his shoulders, setting off his handsome face to the best of advantage, and a Winchester rifle strapped over his shoulder, which had not impeded his movements in the least when he thrashed the bad man, together with a belt that contained a brace of revolvers and a buckhorn bowie, gave him all the appearance of being a true son of the Wild West.

And this is just what he was, for the dashing boy was no other than Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot of the West, Prince of the Saddle and young mine-owner.

With his friends he had struck Hard Scratch about four in the afternoon of a very hot day.

Leaving them under the shade of some trees at the outskirts, he had galloped into the town to see if there was a tavern they could put up at until the following day.

It was a rather warm reception that he received when he reined in his sorrel stallion Spitfire in front of the tavern, but he had managed to make it a great deal warmer for the ruffian who had attacked him.

All the miners who had witnessed the one-sided contest had not followed the boy inside the tavern.

Four of them had stayed outside to render the defeated Terror their assistance.

Tombstone Tom was well known in Hard Scratch, and he was really what he claimed to be—a Terror.

Those who wanted to help him feared him, and that was why they were doing it.

They got him to the camp, and after about ten minutes he came to sufficiently realize that he had been thrashed within an inch of his life.

Young Wild West looked outside and saw the rascal sitting on a box under a tree.

He counted five men with him, and then he nodded and observed to the landlord:

"I suppose those fellows don't like me very much for thrashing Tombstone Tom; they seem to be friends of his."

"Well, I reckon they want ter keep on ther right side of him. Tom is somethin' fierce when he gits started. He'd jest as leave shoot a galoot as ter take a chaw of tobacco."

"Well, I hope he don't try to shoot me. If he has a notion of doing it he had better order his grave dug before he starts in. I have met so many such fellows as he that I am actually getting tired of it. I never look for trouble, but I won't let such a bluffing galoot as he is order me about. I guess I wasn't born to be ordered to do things I don't want to do. Let us all have something, landlord. A cigar will do for me, for I never drink anything strong."

The proprietor hastened to put out the drinks and cigars and the crowd joined in wishing good luck to the boy.

"Who might it be that we're drinkin' with?" the little man who had proposed the cheers asked.

"Young Wild West is my name."

"Oh!"

Then the little man put out his hand and gave our hero a hearty shake.

"I've heard of yer, my boy," he said. "No wonder yer give Tombstone Tom his medicine so easy! Why, boys, this young feller could lick a dozen fellers, let alone one! He's Young Wild West, an' he holds ther title of ther Champeen Deadshot of ther whole West!"

Then they all wanted to shake hands with him, so Young Wild West smiling gave them the privilege.

"Well, I guess I'll go and let my friends know that

we can be accommodated here," he said a couple of minutes later. "Just have a nice room ready for the girls, landlord."

"Yer kin bet I will, Young Wild West. Them gals you're goin' ter fetch here will find jest as nice a room as was ever put in a shanty. I'll go an' tell ther old woman right away."

The dashing boy gave a nod and then went out and mounted his waiting horse.

Tombstone Tom was sitting on the bench, and near him stood the men who had assisted him.

Before our hero could start from the spot the ruffian arose and pulled his shooter, which had been returned to him by one of his cronies.

"Drop that!"

Young Wild West had divined his intention, and he had drawn one of his shooters in a twinkling.

It was on a direct line with the man's breast at that moment, and no one knew it any better than Tombstone Tom himself.

The weapon fell from his hand.

There was something in the voice of the dashing young deadshot that made him quail, as well as the action.

"Lift your right foot, Tombstone Tom!"

The command rang out sharp and clear.

"What do yer mean?" came the reply from the cowed bad man.

"Do as I say!"

The Terror lifted his right foot.

Crack!

Young Wild West fired and the spur flew from the heel of his boot.

"Now your left foot," said the boy.

They were all out of the tavern in time to see Tombstone Tom obey the command.

Crack!

Young Wild West fired again, and off went the other spur.

"Now, you cowardly galoot, you won't have those things to jab in your mustang when you catch him. If I catch you around with spurs on your heels again I am going to shoot them off, just as sure as my name is Young Wild West!"

With that the boy rode off, a cheer from those who had come out of the tavern ringing in his ears.

It was only about a quarter of a mile to the spot where he had left his friends, and in a few minutes from the time he left the tavern he was there.

His friends consisted of Cheyenne Charlie, an ex-government scout, and his wife Anna, who was a pretty young woman; Jim Dart, a boy of about his own age, Eloise Gardner, Jim's sweetheart, and last, but not least, charming Arietta Murdock, the sweetheart of dashing Young Wild West.

The six were making a little trip through Arizona, just for the adventure they could get out of it, and inci-

dentally to strike it rich in the way of gold if it came their way.

We forgot to mention the two Chinese servants, Hop Wah and Wing Wah, who were great Celestials, especially Hop Wah.

But of them later on.

"Well, Wild, how did yer make out?" Cheyenne Charlie asked, as he twisted his drooping black mustache and brushed back his flowing locks.

"First-rate," was the reply. "We can ride right up to the tavern. I have made all the arrangements, besides giving a bad man a thrashing. I haven't been gone very long, either."

CHAPTER II.

WILD SHOWS HOW HE CAN SHOOT.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were attired similarly to Young Wild West and armed exactly the same.

The girls, as they always called Anna, Arietta and Eloise, wore fancy riding suits that were as durable as they were pretty.

Cheyenne Charlie was easily ten years the senior of the boys, but he was still a young man.

Though an experienced scout and Indian fighter, he always relied on the judgment of our hero in anything that came up.

This was probably because Young Wild West was always cool in trying times and quick to think and act.

Usually they all rode in together when they came to a settlement or mining camp, but it happened that Arietta's saddle-girth broke just as they got to a clump of trees in sight of the mining camp, and while Charlie was fixing it with a wax-end the dashing young deadshot decided to leave them all there, while he rode in and found out what sort of a place it was they had struck.

They had met a crowd of cowpunchers back on the trail, and from them they had learned that the nearest town was called Hard Scratch.

"Tell us how you thrashed the bad man, Wild," said Arietta, as her lover buckled the repaired girth for her.

"Well, it was a pretty warm reception that I got when I rode up in front of the Red Hot Tavern," he replied. "I——"

"Probably that was the reason it was warm, Wild. Anything named 'Red Hot' ought to be pretty warm," Arietta interrupted.

The girl tossed her blonde head and laughed, as she got off the sally.

"That might have been the cause of it, Et; but if I got it warm the fellow who tackled me certainly got it hot."

Then he related just what had occurred.

"There's no end ter them kind of galoots in ther West, it seems," remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "I've got so I

kin tell one of 'em a mile away now. I s'pose if you hadn't spunked up he'd have made a laughin'-stock of yer."

"Well, no one has ever managed to quite do that yet, Charlie."

"Oh, I know that! I mean if it had been someone else he'd been made a laughin'-stock of."

"Not you, though."

"No! I would have ripped a bullet into one of his arms afore he knew what he was talkin' about. I don't fool that way with anybody, an' I don't allow anybody ter fool that way with me."

"So you shot the spurs from his heels, eh?" said Jim Dart, with a laugh. "It must have been fun for those who were looking on."

"It was, for the majority of them. But the galoot has four or five friends there, and they all stuck to him. Not in a fighting way, but they were anxious to help him and showed all the sympathy they were capable of handling just then."

They were now ready, so they started for the tavern, the two Chinamen riding in the rear and leading the two pack horses that carried their camping outfit.

At the time of which we are writing the great West in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains was in a much wilder state than it is to-day.

It is wild and dangerous enough in some parts yet, for every now and then we read of hold-ups and raids being made by desperate gangs of outlaws, and of outbreaks among the Indians on the different reservations.

Mining camps like Hard Scratch seldom had anything like law and order to govern them, and if a man got shot in a quarrel there was never an arrest made, simply because there was no one to arrest him.

But if a man committed a murder or stole a horse there was always plenty to take care of him, and when caught he generally got hanged to the nearest tree.

As Young Wild West and his friends traveled over the wildest and most dangerous parts of the country, they met with all sorts of dangers and exciting adventures.

And it had got to be so that they were never satisfied unless they did get into more or less danger.

The party had left Yuma three days before and were going up toward the central part of Arizona just to hunt up some excitement.

Thus far things had gone tamely, and when Young Wild West met the bad man in front of the Red Hot Tavern it was the first excitement he had experienced since leaving Yuma.

They rode up to the tavern at a canter, and when they came to a halt the crowd gathered there gave a cheer, while hats swung through the air and feet stamped the rough boards of the porch.

Jack Pepper, the proprietor, was there, and beside him stood a smiling woman, who was his wife.

She had hurriedly prepared a room for the girls, and now she was on the porch to greet them.

Wild cast a glance around and found that Tombstone Tom was not present.

The men who had assisted him after his knockout were, though, and they simply looked on and took no part in the demonstration.

The girls were ushered in the house in gracious style by the landlady.

The two Chinamen went around to the rear with the horses, and then Young Wild West and his two partners made their way into the part of the tavern that was used as a bar-room.

There was only one man there when they came in, and that was Tombstone Tom.

His face flushed when he saw our hero, but he said nothing.

Wild looked down at his feet and found that there were no spurs there.

The rascal saw the glance and moved uneasily.

"Where is ther galoot what was goin' ter ride on top of yer, Wild?" Cheyenne Charlie asked, for he thought right away that this was the man.

"There he is," the dashing young deadshot replied, nodding at the Terror. "I guess he feels better now."

"Well, his nose an' mouth is putty well swelled. I reckon he feels as though a horse kicked him, by ther looks of him."

The scout laughed.

He did not care whether the bad man liked it or not.

But Tombstone Tom wisely refrained from getting angry.

The crowd came in, as all were interested in Young Wild West now.

But the boy paid little or no attention to them.

He arranged to stop over night at the tavern and paid the bill in advance.

Then, as he was about to go out and see if the horses were being properly cared for, the landlord exclaimed:

"Young Wild West, there's a couple of ther leadin' citizens of Hard Scratch here who would like ter see how yer kin shoot. They wasn't there when yer ripped ther spurs off ther Terror's heels, an' they ain't inclined ter believe that yer done it."

"Why, they don't think that was such good shooting, do they, Mr. Pepper?" asked Wild, who was always ready to give an exhibition.

He knew that good shooting always had a tendency to make the bad element behave.

"I'm one what would like ter see yer make as good a shot as they say yer done," spoke up a poek-marked man with scraggy red whiskers. "I asked ther Terror about it, an' he says he don't know how he lost his spurs. He says yer shot at his heels, but he don't know but that he lost ther spurs when he was layin' on ther ground in a dazed condition."

"Oh! I guess he knows just how he lost them," retorted Wild, with a smile. "He doesn't like to own up, that's all. It is a wonder to me that he hasn't lost more

than his spurs before this. I have seen men shot dead for acting the way he did when I rode up to the tavern."

Our hero could tell plainly that the man with the red whiskers was a sort of bully himself.

He decided to show him what a little straight shooting was.

"What is your name, my friend?" he asked, stepping over to him.

"Red Runyon is ther handle I goes by," was the reply.

"And you are one of the leading citizens of Hard Scratch, are you?"

"I reckon so. I was among ther first lot what struck ther sand hill out there. It was me what named ther camp, fur it was hard scratchin' here at first, an' I said as how Hard Scratch would be ther proper name fur it. I've been ther direct cause of seven funerals since I've been here, too, an' I ain't got no idea how many more galoots I'll drop afore I die."

"Well, I should say that you were one of the leading citizens, Mr. Red Redyun. How is it that you and Tombstone Tom live in the same camp?"

"We ain't never had ther least trouble, have we, Tom?" answered the miner, as he turned to the Terror.

"No," was the reply; "I reckon we was made ter drive double, Red."

"So you would like to see me do some shooting that is as good as I did when I ripped the spurs from the heels of the Terror, eh?" Wild queried in his cool and easy way.

"Yes, I would, young feller."

"Well, do you value that pipe much you are smoking?"

"No; if I was ter lose it I've got two or three more layin' around my shanty."

"Good! You are well supplied, I should say."

Wild then stepped back as though he was going into the rear room, but wheeling suddenly, he drew his shooter and leveled it in the direction of Red Runyon.

Crack!

As the report rang out the bowl of the pipe disappeared and the astonished miner found himself with the stem in his mouth.

"How was that?" asked the young deadshot, coolly. "Now do you believe that I shot the spurs off the heels of the Terror?"

"Jumpin' gallinippers!" yelled Red Runyon, as he took the pipe-stem from between his fingers. "What was that, anyhow?"

"Didn't you see it?"

The man was holding the piece of broken stem out so all could see it, when—

Crack!

Wild fired again and took half of it out of his fingers.

He was a good ten feet from him, too, so it was enough to make the men in the tavern marvel.

"Now," said Wild, just as though he had not yet showed what he could do in the line of shooting, "I will show you some pretty good shooting. Mr. Runyun, I notice that one of your eye-teeth sticks down a little further

than the other. Just stand over there in the corner and open your mouth good and wide."

The man gasped and looked as though he could not believe his own ears.

"What do yer want me ter stand over in ther corner an' open my mouth fur?" he managed to ask.

"I want to trim the tooth that is a little too long to match the other, that's all."

"Say! Don't ask me ter do that, please. I believe yer could do it, though, an' not hurt me a bit; but I don't want ter let yer. It's all right, Young Wild West; I won't never doubt anything I hear that yer do after this. Thunder, but jest think of it!"

Wild had made himself more popular than ever with the men of Hard Scratch.

Those who did not like him—and there were some there—feared him more than ever, too.

Tombstone Tom was completely crushed, for the time being.

It was evident that he had expected Red Runyun to pick a row with the dashing young deadshot, and then he would have joined in and tried to get revenge for the treatment he had received.

But the shooting of the pipe and then the stem capped the climax.

Not a man who saw it done would have thought of trying to pick a row with Young Wild West now.

Red Runyun pulled a bag of money from his pocket and tossed it on the bar.

"Everybody drink ter ther health of ther champion of all ther deadshots!" he exclaimed.

It was just at that moment that one of the Chinamen belonging to Young Wild West's party came in.

It was Hop Wah, the most innocent looking of the two.

But though he looked to be innocent, he was far from it.

He was one of the most slick sleight-of-hand performers that ever deceived the eye of an audience.

Added to this, he was a pronounced gambler and a lover of liquor.

Those were his bad habits, but he had good ones, too.

"What's ther matter, you heathen galoot?" said Cheyenne Charlie, as the Celestial walked up to the bar; "can't git along without a little tanglefoot, I s'pose?"

"No, Mislér Charlie," was the reply; "me havee velly gleat pain; me must havee lillee tanglefoot."

"A heathen Chineese can't drink at this bar!" roared Red Runyun, pulling his revolver.

"Oh, yes, he can," spoke up Wild. "That Chinaman is with us."

"Lat makee allee diffelence in um world, Mislér Bad Melican Man," said Hop, smiling blandly. "Me hear you say evelybody dlink, so me .dlink with you, allee samee Melican mans."

"Jumpin' gallinippers! Give ther heathen ther best there is in ther shebang, Pepper!" cried the miner.

"Me dlink some tanglefoot; len me showee nicee lillee magic tick," Hop said, smiling sweetly.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHINESE MAGICIAN.

Young Wild West and his partners knew the Chinaman was perfectly able to show the miners a mystifying trick.

And as he seemed to be in the humor to perform some of his sleight-of-hand work, they were willing that he should go ahead.

"All right, Hop," Wild said; "go ahead and show us something. But look out you don't drink too much tanglefoot. We may leave early in the morning, and I want you to be in condition to do your work if we do."

"Me feelee allee samee singee bird in um morning," Hop answered.

Then he swallowed the drink he had poured out and bowed to the crowd.

By this time the room was pretty well filled up, for the shooting had attracted others there.

Hop usually selected a victim to get the laugh on when he performed tricks in a bar-room.

It was quite natural that he should select the red-whiskered man, since he had shown such opposition to him when he entered the place.

"You velly nicee man," he said, feeling of a button on the miner's shirt front. "Me likee you; you tleatee poor Chineese, so me showee velly nicee lillee tick."

Red Runyun had no idea that the foundation of the trick was being laid while the wily Celestial was talking to him, but such was the case, for Hop was not only fooling with the button on his shirt, but putting something under the garment at the same time.

"What is the trick you're goin' ter show me?" asked the miner, emphasizing the word "me," for he seemed to feel pleased at the way the Chinaman was praising him up.

Hop stepped back suddenly.

"You eatee um sausage for um dinner!" he said, excitedly, and waving his hands at the astonished man.

"That's a lie!" was the retort. "I ain't seen a sausage since I left Denver two years ago."

Hop shook his head doubtfully.

"Me no makee mistake, so be," he declared. "Whatee gottee here? You eatee sausage, and you puttee some under shirtee to savee; you havee sausagee two years ago in Denver, and you savee somee till now."

Then he caught hold of a string that was sticking from the opening in Red Runyun's shirt, and putting his left hand against his breast, began pulling upon it.

He made it appear that he was pulling all his might, but he was not, of course.

Suddenly a string of half a dozen sausages came from under the flannel shirt the miner wore.

"Wow!" cried Red Runyun. "Where in thunder did them things come from?"

He was the picture of amazement, and Hop Wah looked to be the same.

"Great pantaloons, Red, yer don't mean ter say that you've had them things under your shirt fur two years, do yer?" cried Pepper, the landlord.

"Thunder, no!" was the reply. "I ain't got ther least idee how they come ter be there. Mighty funny, I say!"

"Velly stlange," commented Hop.

Then he calmly squeezed the supposed sausages in his hand, one at a time, and they vanished from sight.

This was something great in the eyes of the men.

How the Chinaman had caused the sausages to disappear they did not know.

If they had known that they were but skins made of rubber, filled with air, it would have seemed simple enough.

"Me likee have you hat lillee while," said Hop, just as though nothing strange had happened.

"What do yer want it fur?" asked Red Runyun, looking a bit doubtful.

"Me wantee see whatee you got in um."

"Well, there ain't nothin' in it."

"Ain't your head in it, you big galoot?" asked the landlord, with a chuckle.

There was a laugh at this and then the spectators were restored to their normal state again.

Hop reached over and took the hat from the man's head.

It was a high-crowned sombrero such as the Mexicans wear.

The Celestial stepped over to a corner of the room, so no one could look at him from behind, and then began to examine the inside of the hat.

Pretty soon he put his hand in it and drew out a pack of cards.

It was the oldtime hat trick which nearly every magician in the country has performed over and over again.

But when it is done right it is always bound to create a laugh.

"You play dlaw pookie, me see," said Hop, smilingly.

"I reckon I do," was the reply. "But I didn't put them cards in my hat."

"You dlinkee tanglefoot," went on Hop, and then he took out a pint flask and placed it on a chair at his side.

The flask was empty, as might be supposed, for the Celestial was not exposing any that had liquor in them. That was not his way of doing business.

The miners looked at him in astonishment.

"You likee know whatee timee is," went on Hop, and then he pulled out a silver watch.

The watch really belonged to Runyun, for Hop had picked it from his pocket.

He looked aghast when he recognized it as his, and

found that it had disappeared from the place he always carried it.

"How in thunder did that watch git in my hat?" he cried.

"Me no know," answered Hop, looking at him and smiling in his bland fashion.

Then he pulled another empty flask from the hat and placed it on the chair beside the rest of the articles.

Next came Runyun's six-shooter.

The miner felt of the holster at his side and found it was not there, and then he was more surprised than ever.

"How did that git in my hat?" he asked, looking around for someone to explain it to him.

But no one had seen Hop take it from him, so they did not know.

The next thing the Celestial magician pulled out of the hat was a baby's rattle.

"You likee baby allee light," said Hop.

Then he pulled out a clay pipe and two cigar stumps.

"You likee smokee," he observed.

The next thing to come to light was a bottle of ink and a pen, and when the landlord looked at the shelf near the end of the bar, where he always kept a pen and ink, and found his had vanished, he knew they were his.

But he had not seen the Chinaman take them, so he was much mystified.

Hop felt into the hat again and then brought forth slowly something that capped the climax.

It was a big paper parasol of various colors!

"Lere!" he exclaimed, as he handed the hat back to Red Redyun, and then started around the room with the parasol over his head; "me t'inkee your hat holdee plenty, so be."

"Say, boys," cried the landlord, "I call that about ther best I've ever seen in the line of magic, don't you?"

They all agreed with him promptly.

Some of them could not understand it at all. They were not willing to believe that the various articles had not been in the hat when Hop took it from Runyun.

But the parasol was what staggered the most of them.

They did not stop to think that the handle might be jointed paper, and that the rest of it could be folded into a very small bunch.

When they had examined the hat thoroughly, evidently for the purpose of assuring themselves that there was nothing more in it, Red Runyun called for the drinks again.

"Give ther Chinese professor ther best you've got, Jack Pepper!" he exclaimed. "Nothin' ain't too good fur him."

The miner had plenty of money and he began to let it fly.

"I tell yer what I think," he said a few minutes later, "Tombstone Tom ought ter make friends with Young Wild West. He got an awful lickin', I know; but he oughter be glad he's livin'. S'pose ther boy had shot at

his head instead of his spurs! What then? Come, Tom, I reckon ther best thing yer kin do is ter tell Young Wild West that you're sorry yer acted ther way yer did when he rode up to ther tavern."

"I don't know as I ought ter be sorry fur anything I done ter him," was the surly rejoinder. "What did I do ter him, anyhow? Kin anyone tell me where I even hurt a hair on his head?"

There was a glitter in the eyes of the rascally fellow as he looked around for somebody to make a reply to the question.

"Well, Tom, I'll jest tell yer why yer didn't hurt a hair in Young Wild West's head," answered the tavern-keeper; "it was because he wouldn't let yer! Everybody what seen it knows that."

"I reckon you're gittin' putty soon, Pepper, or yer wouldn't talk ter me that way. This ain't ther only time I'll ever be in your old shanty, mebber!"

"I only said what was right, though, Tom. What's ther use of you gittin' mad, anyhow? Jest because yer got a lickin' to-day don't say that yer can't be called ther Terror no more."

Pepper was talking just the least bit sarcastic now, and as he had always been very respectful when the Terror came around previous to this, it certainly looked as though he was piling it on him a bit.

In his own heart he no longer feared the man.

The very fact that he had been thrashed by a mere boy was enough to make him think that a man could do it, providing he tried pretty hard.

The Terror started for the door.

"Where are yer goin', Tom?" asked Red Runyun, who seemed anxious to smooth things over.

"Ter look fur my nag," was the reply.

"Better do what I said," coaxed the miner.

"I know my own mind better than you do, Red."

"All right, then; I'll say no more."

Tombstone Tom went on out of the place.

He looked up and down the single street and presently saw his horse standing under a tree about a hundred yards distant.

Then he started toward him at a swift walk.

When he reached the mustang he mounted, and without looking back, rode away at an easy canter.

"Now, if I kin find them two Injuns I reckon I'll fix it so I'll git square on this Young Wild West," he muttered. "I ain't ther same man I was afore he stuck this town, an' I know it. Ther lickin' I got from him made some of 'em laugh, when they used ter turn pale when I come around, lettin' myself go. Ther galoots of Hard Scratch ain't afraid of me now; leastwise ther most of 'em ain't. There's ther two Mosley brothers an' Coxey, though. They'd stick ter me through most anything 'cause they're a leetle afraid I might tell how they stole ther cattle last month if they didn't. I wonder where they went? With them an' ther two Injuns I reckon I

could find a way ter clean out that wonderful boy, what's got ther strength of half a dozen men an' kin shoot so straight!"

As if to answer his question, three men appeared riding out of the woods near at hand.

They were the identical ones he had been thinking of.

The face of Tombstone Tom lighted up.

"Hello, boys!" he called out. "What are yer doin' here?"

"Well, we reckoned you'd come this way, so we come on ahead, Tom," one of them answered. "We couldn't git Norris ter come with us. He likes yer all right, but he says he ain't goin' ter git mixed up in any trouble, since he's got a wife an' child ter support. He allowed that we'd try ter help yer git square on ther young galoot what walloped yer so, an' he says he don't want none of it."

"Well, all right. Let him have his own way about it. He's putty much of a coward, anyhow."

"Where are yer goin', Tom?" asked the man called Coxey.

"Well, I was goin' ter look up my two Injun friends," was the reply. "It ain't only one that we've got ter down; ther boy what is called Young Wild West has got two pards. One of 'em is a boy an' ther other is a man what looks as though he'd as leave fight as eat. An' there's a Chinaman with 'em, too. It ain't an ordinary Chineese, but a galoot what kin do ther wonderfulest things yer ever seen or heard of. I reckon he'd be a bad man ter fool with."

The men looked surprised.

They had no idea that a Chinaman could be a bad man to fool with.

All they had ever met around the mining camps had seemed to be very mild and docile.

The Mosley brothers were named Hank and Jake.

They, like Coxey, were of the kind who only lack a leader to make them do almost anything.

They were now ready to help Tombstone Tom out in anything he wanted done.

And incidentally they expected to make something by doing it.

"We'll ride along to ther gorge an' see if we kin find ther Injuns," the Terror said. "I reckon Young Wild West an' his pards must have some money with 'em, an' most likely we kin find a way ter git it, an' git square fur what ther young galoot done ter me at ther same time."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOUNDED STRANGER.

Supper time soon came around and then Young Wild West and his partners went in and joined the girls in the scantily-furnished dining-room of the tavern.

The floor was bare of carpet, but it was clean, and there was a white cloth on the table.

The crockery was not of the best, but the food was, and that was what was wanted by our friends.

The meal was a very satisfactory one to them, and they enjoyed it immensely, since it was the first time they had eaten under a roof since leaving Yuma.

Hop and Wing were served in the kitchen, along with the two servants in the employ of the tavern-keeper.

At the table Cheyenne Charlie related how Hop had surprised the men in the bar-room with his magic, and there was a laugh all around.

There were those there besides the girls who knew nothing about this, and they expressed their surprise at a Chinaman being able to do so much, for the average Son of the Flowery Kingdom to be found in that part of the country was generally supposed to be innocent and dull.

It was quite natural that they should want to be treated to a performance, so Wild told them that after Hop had finished his supper he would call him in the dining-room and let him show them a trick, providing, of course, that the lady of the house was agreeable.

But she was perfectly willing, for she had never seen much in that line, being the daughter of a ranchman eighty miles distant, and having been brought up where shows were out of the question.

So after the table was cleared Wild found Hop and told him what was required of him.

"Alee light," was the reply. "Me do velly nicee lilliee tlick."

"Give us the boquet of flowers trick for the benefit of the landlord's wife," Wild said. "Then you can do something funny if you have a mind to."

Hop nodded.

"Me be leady in um fivee minutes," he remarked.

It was just about five minutes later that he came into the room looking as innocent as a little child.

To all appearances, he had nothing with him more than any Chinaman would have, but the pockets in that loose-fitting garment he wore in lieu of a coat contained more pockets than anyone would be apt to dream of.

And in those pockets were many things that could be used to mystify people, as well as amuse them.

"Goodee evening," said Hop, bowing right and left and wagging his queue.

The salute was returned, and then he took his place at the head of the long table.

"Hop," said Young Wild West, rising to his feet, "the ladies and gentlemen would like to see you do a little magic."

"Allee light," was the reply, "me showee velly nicee lilliee tlick."

Then he looked around the room until his eyes rested on the landlord's wife.

"Me havee lilliee glass me pickee outsidee," he resumed, smiling at her, and pulling a bunch of grass from be-

neath his gown. "Me makee nicee flowers for you flom um glass."

"What does he say?" the woman asked, turning to Anna, who was sitting next to her.

"He says he is going to make some nice flowers for you from the grass he has in his hand."

"Oh, he can't do that, can he?"

"Yes, I think he can. He is a very clever person, you know."

"But how can he do it? That is only common grass he has there."

Hop stepped over and handed her the grass.

"Takee lookee," he said.

Then, while they were looking at it, he pulled his big yellow handkerchief from his pocket and shook it out to show that there was nothing in it.

The grass was handed back to him, and then he lifted the handkerchief and placed it under it.

He carefully worked the handkerchief in the shape of a pyramid, so it would stand alone on the table, and then smiled and looked thoughtfully at the ceiling.

There was a deep silence, for everybody was waiting to see what would happen next.

"Me gottee velly smartee uncle in China," Hop remarked, shutting his eyes and shaking his head, as though he was in doubt about something. "He gleat mandarin, and me takee after him; me makee bunch of glass turn to um bunch of flowers, so be."

"Let's see you do it," said one of the mine-owners present.

"Allee light."

Then the Celestial lifted the handkerchief, and lying on the table was a bunch of flowers that looked as though they had just been picked.

A murmur of surprise went up from those not familiar with Hop's tricks.

The landlord's wife held up her hands and declared that her eyes must be deceiving her.

"Velly nicee bunch of flowers," said Hop, shaking out the handkerchief.

Then he picked up the flowers and handed them to the woman, bowing politely in the act.

"They are just like some I have growing outside," she said. "Isn't it wonderful!"

The scout grinned when he heard this, for he knew very well that Hop was simply presenting her with some of her own flowers.

But it was a very good trick, since no one had been able to see him put the grass in his pocket and substitute the flowers for it.

Hop's hands were quicker than the eye.

The landlady went and got a glass of water and placed the flowers in it, leaving the glass on the table.

Hop looked around and then let his handkerchief drop over the flowers.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, acting as though he had not meant to do it; "me no mean to covvee um flowers."

He lifted the handkerchief quickly, and then, much to the astonishment of the lookers-on, the flowers had vanished and the bunch of grass was there instead.

"Water in um glass must have makee flowers turnee back to um glass," Hop said, shaking his head, sadly. "Here, missus, you takee and thlow um water outee."

He picked up the glass and handed it to the astonished woman.

But the moment she had it in her hand the water began to hiss and bubble over.

The good woman uttered a cry of fright and dropped the glass.

But the Chinaman evidently anticipated some such action from her, for he deftly caught it.

The contents were spilled on the floor, however, which made no particular difference, since there was nothing there it could soil.

Then he put the handkerchief over the bunch of grass again and carefully wrapped it up as though he did not want to break any of the spears.

This done, he handed it to the woman and told her to unwrap the bunch.

She did so rather gingerly.

The flowers were again exposed to view.

"Now you takee, but no puttee in um water," Hop said, shaking his head. "If um do flowers allee samee turnee to bunchee glass some more."

"Thank you, Mr. Hop; I will do just as you say. But isn't it wonderful?" and she turned to the girls.

"It does seem wonderful to anyone who has not seen it done before," Arietta answered.

"Do you know how he does it?"

"No; I can't say that I do. But of course he simply deceives you, you know."

The woman shook her head.

"It is the greatest thing I ever saw done," she declared.

But Hop was not done yet.

He had a bigger surprise waiting for them.

He took from his pocket a common pasteboard match-box of the oblong style.

Sliding the cover from it, he showed all hands that it was empty.

"Now me puttee in two, thlee matchee and um box jumpee aloud um table," he remarked, smiling blandly.

"It will be funny if you do," spoke up a miner.

"Velly funny," the Celestial assured him.

Then he took two matches, which were furnished by Jim, and placed them in the box and slid the cover on it.

Placing it near the center of the table, he threw his handkerchief over it and adjusted it carefully about the box.

While doing this he told them something more about the uncle he had in China.

That uncle of his must have been a great man, indeed,

but somehow he had never been able to tell just what his greatness consisted of.

A couple of minutes later he lifted the handkerchief, and then the box gave a hop and landed clean off the table.

Hop picked it up quickly and placed it on the table again.

Then the match-box gave another jump and landed a foot away.

He righted it quickly and then it wriggled around in a semi-circle, while the surprised ones held their breath.

"Velly nicee lillee tlick," remarked Hop, as he picked up the box and placed it in his pocket.

"Let me see that box, won't yer?" asked a miner. "I thought I seen little legs stickin' out of ther bottom of it."

With a smile, Hop handed it over.

The man opened it and found the two matches he had seen put in it before it was covered with the handkerchief.

He was completely stumped.

"I must have been mistaken," he declared. "But I'd like ter know what made ther blamed thing jump around like that."

He was not mistaken at all, for there were legs sticking from the box that had hopped around on the table.

The legs belonged to a big grasshopper, too, for Hop had put one in that particular box and allowed the legs to protrude through holes he made for the purpose.

He had fixed up the box before he came into the room, of course, and it was easy for him to put it in the place of the one he placed the matches in.

It was just as this trick was concluded that the landlord came in leading a man who was wounded.

"Excuse me fur disturbin' ther party," he said. "But this feller jest rode up in a putty bad condition. He's lost so much blood that he feels faint. Young Wild West, maybe you know how ter fix him up."

"Give me a little whisky first," gasped the wounded man. "Then if someone will bind up my shoulder I reckon I'll feel better."

Cheyenne Charlie hastened to the barroom and got the liquor for the man.

He gulped it down and then declared that he felt better.

Wild and Jim got at the wound in his shoulder and soon dressed it.

It had been made by a glancing blow from an ax, so the stranger said, but he did not tell them any more just then.

Wild advised him to take a sleep till morning, and he said he guessed he would.

But he was given something to eat first.

"That fellow has been in a pretty hot fight with somebody," Wild said, after they got the man to the room the landlady turned over to his use, which was the same that Wild, Charlie and Jim were to occupy.

"He sartinly has," Charlie hastened to reply. "A crack from an ax is a bad thing, I reckon."

"He looks like an honest fellow," Jim remarked.

"Oh, yes. I hardly think there is any of the villain about him," our hero answered.

They went out and had a look at the horse that had brought the man to the tavern.

It was an Indian pony and was pretty well played out.

"Just see to it that the horse has good care; I will pay for it if the rider don't," Wild said to Jack Pepper.

"All right," was the reply. "I was goin' ter take care of ther nag anyhow. Ther feller has got money, 'cause he told me so ther minute he landed here. Did he say what happened ter him?"

"No, he hasn't told us yet, any more than he got the wound in his shoulder from an ax."

"Someone took him fur a tree, an' started ter cut him down, eh?"

"It looks that way."

"Well, none of ther boys has ever seen him before, so we don't know his name. But I reckon he'll be took care of, as well as his nag, an' if he ain't got enough money ter pay fur it, I'll be ther loser, that's all."

The landlord was a pretty generous fellow, after all.

Our friends did not stay long in the bar and card rooms that night.

They remained in the big room at the other side of the house with the girls until it was time to turn in, and then they were not long in getting to their sleeping quarters.

It was a big room in the attic that Wild and his partners were to occupy with the wounded man, and when they got to it they found him sleeping nicely.

"He'll feel pretty good in the morning," said Wild. "Then we will find out what happened to him."

CHAPTER V.

RALPH COOLEY TELLS ABOUT THE CAVERN AND UNDERGROUND STREAM.

The next morning when Young Wild West arose he found the wounded man was awake.

"If you git me a drink of water, pard, I'd be thankful ter yer," said the man. "I'm a bit feverish, I reckon, an' I've been wantin' a drink fur ther last two or three hours."

"Why didn't you call out?" Wild answered. "I guess we would have been only too glad to get you a drink. We are all human, you know."

"I didn't want ter make no trouble fur yer. It will taste all ther better now fur ther waitin'."

Our hero was not long in getting him the water.

When he had drank his fill he was much refreshed.

"I reckon I'll be all right in a couple of days. That cut ain't very deep. Ther bleedin' was ther worst part of it. I couldn't stop it."

"You must have lost considerable blood," Wild answered. "So the cut came from an ax, eh?"

"Yes, pard, an ax in ther hands of a drunken Injun, too. It was a hard fight, but I won out after a while. You see, I was in ther hills back here about forty miles, when I struck a mighty big cavern that's got no end of passages in it. They run this way an' that, an' about all of 'em fetches out on ther bank of a stream of water which goes ter no one knows where. It's a mighty dark-lookin' stream, an' it goes rushin' along an' makes a noise like ther water in a mill-race."

"An underground stream, eh?"

"Yes, that's what yer might call it, 'cause it is sartinly under the ground. Well, as I was goin' ter say, ther Injun what cut me with ther ax took a dive in that stream when I got hold of my shooter, which he had knocked out of my hand at ther start. He jest let out a yell an' chucked himself right in. That was ther last of ther galoot, I reckon, 'cause when I picked up ther torch he had stuck in a crevice an' looked down there was nothin' but black, rushin' water ter be seen."

"Rather funny that an Indian would commit suicide, isn't it?"

"That's what I thought, but I s'pose he thought it was all up with him when he seen I got my shooter."

"There was only one in the fight with you, then?"

"No; there was two of 'em. I dropped ther other one jest afore ther galoot what jumped inter ther water knocked my shooter from my hand with ther ax."

"Were they Apaches?"

"Yes, they was 'Paches, an' mighty bad ones, too. They didn't like it 'cause I come in ther big cavern; seemed ter act as though there was somethin' there they didn't want me ter see. I'd looked through half a dozen of ther crooked passages afore they come upon me. Then they ordered me ter git out an' not come back agin. I allowed that I had as much right there as they had, an' then they started in ter carve me up. Say, I like you, young feller. I want yer to go with me ter that cavern. I think there's gold in it, or somethin' that's worth a whole lot of money."

Wild was much interested.

Charlie and Jim had been listening to the conversation, and they nodded when he turned and looked at them.

"You three fellers strike me as bein' all right," went on the wounded man. "I'll take yer all ter ther cavern, if you will go. Are yer strangers around here?"

"Yes, right around these parts we are," retorted Wild. Then he told him who they were and what they were doing.

The man nodded approvingly.

"Jest ther kind of fellers I want ter go ter ther mysterious cavern with me," he said. "Yer see, I call it a mysterious cavern, 'cause them crooked passages in it all come out at ther one place, which is on ther brink of ther underground stream. Then, ther fact that them Injuns didn't want me inter ther cavern makes it 'pear sorter mysterious, don't yer think so?"

"Yes," answered our hero, "there certainly is something mysterious about it. It will be just the place to take the

girls to show them something they are not in the habit of seeing every day. A cavern full of crooked passages and an underground stream is worth seeing."

"Yer don't mean ter take ther gals I seen downstairs last night with us, do yer?" asked the man, in surprise.

"Sure! They are used to all sorts of dangers, and I guess there won't be much danger about the cavern, now that the two Indians, who did not want you in it, are dead."

"No; but there may be more of 'em around, yer know."

"Well, if there is we will try and make them tell us why they don't want us there."

The wounded man shook his head.

"What is your name?" Wild asked. "I have told you who we were, but you forgot to tell who you are."

"That's so! By jingo! I don't know why it was that I didn't tell yer right at ther start. I've got nothin' ter be ashamed of, an' I'm perfectly willin' ter let anyone know my name. My name is Ralph Cooley. I'm a prospector, an' some day I expect ter strike it rich. I was born in Kansas, an' three years ago I come ter Arizona. I'm twenty-eight years old, an' my father an' mother is both livin' on ther farm in Kansas."

"Well, you have told all about yourself in a few words. Now, Mr. Cooley, if you don't mind, we will start for this cavern you talk about as soon as you are able to ride your horse."

"All right, Mr. West. I am very glad I met you. But mind! I won't say for sure that there is any gold to be found in ther place. I only got that idea 'cause ther two Injuns didn't want me around there. They wouldn't try ter kill a feller fur nothin', would they?"

"Hardly. You can bet there is something there. There is just enough about what you have told to make me feel like paying a visit to the place."

"Me, too," spoke up Jim.

"An' I reckon I'm feelin' jest as though I'd like ter see that underground stream," added the scout.

Wild now looked at Cooley's wound, and found it was getting along nicely.

He dressed it, and then the man insisted on getting up and going downstairs with them.

"I feel a little weak an' a little sore," he said. "But by to-morrow I'll be able ter ride my horse, I know. This ain't ther worst I've had happen ter me since I've been in Arizony. I had a mix-up with a bear a couple of months ago, an' it was three weeks afore I was able ter walk agin. I'm feelin' a whole lot better than I thought I'd feel this mornin', I kin tell yer!"

The girls got up a little later, and then it was not long before they all had breakfast.

Ralph Cooley showed that he had a very strong constitution, for he improved rapidly.

However, he took it easy all day, and when he retired that night he declared he would be ready to set out with them the next morning.

Wild tried to make him wait a couple of days longer, but it was no use.

Cooley seemed to be anxious to get to the big cavern.

It was a novel trip, so Young Wild West thought, and he felt confident that something would come of it.

It seemed that he and his friends were always falling into novel situations, anyhow.

Wild had seen nothing of Tombstone Tom since he left the tavern, after refusing to be friendly with him at the suggestion of Red Runyon.

Red Runyon was at the tavern that night, as usual, and after they had talked it over with Ralph Cooley, and seen that he was made comfortable when he retired, our hero and his two partners went into the bar-room to see what was going on.

The red-whiskered miner was the first to greet them, and he appeared so very friendly that Wild made up his mind that there was something up.

He put no faith in the fellow, anyhow, for he could readily read his character, and knew that he was a bad man at heart.

"Where are yer goin' when yer leave here, Young Wild West?" he asked, as he looked at the boy sharply and puffed on his pipe.

"We are going to head for Phoenix," was the reply. "After we get there we will strike out southeast for the Rio Grande, where I own a ranch."

"Oh!"

"What did you want to know for?" Wild asked.

"Nothin', only I'm goin' in that direction myself on a little business trip, an' I thought maybe if yer was goin' ter-morrer mornin' I could go along with yer fur a ways."

"Well, I don't know as there would be any objections to you going along with us, Runyon. But I assure you that if you do you will have to behave yourself, and not try to get square on me for what happened to you and your friend, Tombstone Tom."

The miner gave a start.

He had not expected a retort like this.

"Why, what do yer mean?" he asked.

"Just what I say. I have an idea that you would like to get the chance to down me, and that you want to accompany us to-morrow just for that purpose. I guess I am not far out of the way, am I?"

"Well, well! I never thought yer had an idea like that! Why, I ain't got no grudge agin yer. Jest because yer licked Tombstone Tom don't say that I'd have anything agin yer, does it?"

"No, it does not say so, but that is the opinion I have of you."

"Then I won't go along with yer. I'll strike out alone."

"All right. That will suit us all better."

The man walked away.

"You certainly put it to him straight, Wild," observed Jim, with a smile.

"I reckon that's jest right," spoke up the scout. "That galoot is no good, an' I know it."

"You are right on that, Charlie," Wild said.

It was not more than five minutes later that Tombstone Tom and the three men who had agreed to stick to him and rob Young Wild West and his friends came in.

It was the first they had been there since the trouble between Wild and the Terror.

The moment they came in they were joined by Red Runyon.

"I'm glad to see yer, boys," the miner said. "How did yer make out?"

"Putty good," replied Tombstone Tom. "Have yer found out when Young Wild West an' his crowd is goin' ter leave?"

"Yes; they're goin' ter leave here in ther mornin'. I was jest tryin' ter work it so's I could be one of ther party, but it was no go."

"Wouldn't take yer in, eh?"

"Not much! Ther young galoot says as how I'm no good."

"He does, hey?"

The villains were near the door, talking in whispers, and far enough away from our three friends to converse without being heard by them.

Wild paid no more than ordinary attention to them, anyhow, for so long as they did not bother him he was bound to let them alone.

It was getting a little late, so our three friends decided to retire.

When they left the room Red Runyon breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad they're gone," he said, as he picked up the glass of liquor his friend had ordered for him. "Somehow, I don't feel exactly safe when ther boy is around. When he looks at yer it seems that he's seein' through an' readin' jest what you're thinkin' about. He's a bad one ter have agin yer, is Young Wild West."

"Well, we ain't ther sort ter be his friends, I reckon; so that makes it so he's got ter be agin us," answered the Terror. "I know one thing! He jest made me look putty small in this camp since he give me that lickin' yisterday. Why, I reckon most any galoot in Hard Scratch would turn on me now."

"I s'pose that's about ther case, Tom. Yer see, yer always ruled with a heavy hand, an' they got ter be afraid of yer. But jest 'cause yer got licked by a boy they've made up their minds that you ain't as much as yer made out ter be. I kin see how it is, fur I'm a putty good jedger of human nature."

"Well, I've got ter git square, if I lose my right hand doin' it. I'm goin' ter make Young Wild West wish he never was born afore I am many hours older. An' we'll make some money at ther same time."

"Good!" exclaimed Coxey, while the Mosley brothers nodded to show how they felt on the subject.

The three villains had no grudge against our hero, but

they wanted a share of the money that could be got from him and his friends.

That was the main incentive they had for joining in the fight against him.

After a while they went in the rear room and sat down at a table.

They drank and talked it over, and it was decided that they should follow the party when it left the camp, and when the proper time arrived they would attack our hero and his companions and rob them.

"I couldn't find ther two Injuns I wanted ter help in this business, but I reckon ther five of us kin do it all right," Tombstone Tom observed, as he swallowed a drink. "There's only three of 'em, an' if we kin drop 'em in a hurry we won't have much trouble with ther gals an' ther Chinaman."

"I heard ther landlord say that a galoot which come here with a cut in his shoulder is goin' away with 'em," said Red Runyon. "That makes four of 'em."

"Well, there's five of us, so I reckon it'll be all right."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY TO THE CAVERN.

Ralph Cooley was rather pale and weak, but he declared he was fit to take the ride to the cavern when he arose in the morning, so Young Wild West consented to make the start.

It was only forty miles away, so Cooley declared, and that meant that they could take it easy and get there before night.

Hop and Wing were ordered to get the pack-horses ready as soon as they had eaten their breakfast, and the two Chinamen hastened to obey.

While they were loading the animals Red Runyon strolled out to the shed that answered for a stable for the tavern.

"Mornin'," said he, pleasantly, to Hop. "I s'pose yer feel putty good this mornin', don't yer?"

"Me feelee allee samee bully boy with um glasse eye," retorted Hop, grinning at the man he had astonished with his sleight-of-hand performance.

"Goin' away this mornin'?" asked the rascally miner.

"Yes; me go putty soonee."

"Where are yer goin' to?"

"Me no know," retorted Hop. "Whattée Melican man wantee know for?"

"Oh, I jest asked yer, that's all. It don't make no difference ter me where yer go."

Hop grinned.

He knew right away that the man was trying to find out where they were going for some purpose.

Red Runyon walked away just in time to get out of sight

before Wild and his partners came out to get their own and the girls' horses ready.

Then Hop told him that the villain had been there asking questions.

"All right," said the dashing young deadshot. "You couldn't have told him where we are bound if you had wanted to, Hop. But it makes little difference whether he knows or not. One thing, if he follows us and looks for trouble he will get more than he wants of it."

"Me no likee Led Lunyon," answered the Celestial, shaking his head. "He allee samee badee man, like um Tombstone Tom."

"You've got that right, I reckon," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"Me allee samee putty smart; me tellee bad man ffrom goodee man, evely timee."

"You certainly can, Hop," Jim Dart hastened to say.

"My blother velly muchee smartee," observed Wing; "me likee be smartee, but me only um fool Chinee."

Jim assisted them with the pack-horses, and then got his own saddled and ready for use.

By this time Wild and the scout had the rest ready, so they led them around to the front of the tavern.

The man in charge of the stable had already taken Cooley's mount around, so they were now ready for the start.

Wild had paid the bill before coming out, and when he came around Pepper was waiting for him with a dozen cigars.

"Take these an' smoke 'em on your way over ther range," he said. "I like you folks, an' I'm sorry ter see yer go away. I've got a little present fur ther Chinees, too."

Then he handed Hop an oblong package which looked very much as though it was a bottle wrapped up.

"Me velly muchee 'bligee," said the Celestial magician.

"Yer kin give your brother some of what's in it, if you've a mind ter," the landlord replied.

"Allee light; me always givee my blother whattee me gottee."

Wing shook his head, as though he never knew much about it if Hop did give him anything.

Once in a great while he gave him whisky, but that was to get him in the humor to do a little gambling.

And when Wing gambled with his brother he always lost money in the operation.

"If yer ever come along this way don't furgit ther Red Hot Tavern," said Pepper, as they rode off.

"You bet we won't!" Wild answered. "Good-by, all!"

There were half a dozen miners there, and they gave them a rousing cheer.

Wild was pretty certain that they would be followed, so after they had got about half a mile out of the town he turned in the saddle and looked back.

Sure enough, five horsemen were following them.

"I guess we'll have trouble before we get to the cavern," he said to Cooley. "I made a couple of enemies in Hard

Scratch, and I guess they mean to down me if they can. There are five men coming along after us now, and two of them are the rascals I call my enemies."

"Well, if half what I have heard about you is true I reckon you kin take care of ther galoots if they try any of their games on yer," answered the prospector. "Jest let 'em come along! I kin shoot putty good, if I have got a gash in my shoulder. I ain't altogether laid up, I reckon."

They all turned around to have a look at those following them, but the villains took to the woods at the side of the trail just then, and were lost to view.

They saw no more of the men until noon, when they stopped to rest the horses and eat their dinner.

Charlie and Jim had shot some sage-hens and a couple of partridges, and as they had made pretty good time, so far, they decided to halt long enough to broil them.

It was while they were waiting for them to get cooked that the five villains came riding up.

None of them had rifles, but they were all armed with revolvers and hunting-knives, and Wild soon noticed that both Tombstone Tom and Red Runyon had their hands on the shooters they had in their belts.

That meant that they were ready to shoot in a hurry.

"Keep right on going, gentlemen," said the dashing young deadshot, coolly, and then he pulled one of his six-shooters and had them covered before they knew it.

Tombstone Tom, who was slightly in advance of the rest, had been in the act of reining in his mustang, and when he saw the revolver in the boy's hand he turned pale and allowed the animal to keep on at a slow walk.

Charlie and Jim had drawn their shooters by this time, and they now stood with them in their hands, ready to begin firing the moment it was necessary.

"What's ther matter with yer?" the Terror asked, affecting to be surprised. "We was only goin' ter stop ter ask yer a question."

He brought his horse to a halt as he said this, evidently hoping to throw the boy off his guard.

"Keep right on going!" answered the dashing young deadshot. "If you don't want to drop off that horse with a bullet through your heart, do as I tell you."

Then the villain lost no time in starting the mustang up, and in single file the rest rode after him.

They were soon out of sight around a bend a hundred yards away, and the moment they were Wild started after them on foot.

"I am going to try and find out what their game is," he said.

He hastened along the trail, treading lightly as he went.

When he came to the bend he dropped close to the ground and crept to a clump of bushes.

As he expected, the five men had come to a halt.

They sat in the saddle talking in low tones, but not so low that Wild could hear and understand what was being said.

"I knowed that game wouldn't work," he heard one of them say. "I was fur sneakin' up on 'em an' lettin' 'em have it without them seein' us."

It was Coxey who said this, and by the way they acted, it was evident that the rest thought he was right.

"Well," said Red Runyon, "I had an idea that they wouldn't mind talkin' ter us, an' while we was makin' out that we was friends we could have pulled our guns an' dropped 'em at close range."

"Yer might have had a chance ter do that if yer had kept your hands away from your shooters when we rode up. They seen you an' Tom have your fingers froze ter yer shooters, an' that was enough ter make Young Wild West think we was up ter somethin'."

Our hero smiled as he heard this.

He now knew the villains were after him for a certainty.

Forewarned is forearmed, so they say.

"Ther best thing ter do now is ter hide somewhere till they come along, an' then let 'em have it from behind ther rocks," said Tombstone Tom.

"Yes," nodded Red Runyon. "That's ther best way. We'll ride on ahead ter them rocks over there. We kin put our horses in ther woods back of 'em, an' then wait till they come along."

"That's what we'll do, then," exclaimed the Terror.

The rest nodded, and then all five rode for the rocks that were just about two hundred yards from the spot they had halted at.

"All right, you scoundrels!" Young Wild West muttered. "I guess you won't ambush us, though. If anyone drops it will be one of you, and I'll bet on that."

Wild waited until he saw them halt, and put their horses in the strip of woods back of the rocks.

Then he walked back to the camp.

"How did yer make out, Wild?" asked the scout. "Did yer see anything of 'em?"

"Yes. They halted as soon as they got around the bend, just as I thought they would do," was the reply. "They have now gone a little further on, and they are going to wait behind some rocks till we come along, and then open fire on us. They have arranged it very nice, but I hardly think the game will work."

"Then they mean to kill us, do they?" Jim Dart asked.

"Yes; they seem to be very anxious to do it, too."

"All right. That means that we have got to kill some of them, I suppose."

"Not unless it is absolutely necessary, Jim. We must protect ourselves, of course; but we may be able to get along without killing any of them."

"If they shoot at me I'll shoot at them!" said the scout, grimly.

Charlie had little mercy for men who were bad enough to lie in ambush for the purpose of shooting down an unsuspecting party of travelers.

If they fired one shot he would answer it, and he would shoot to kill.

But Wild did not mean that they would be shot at from ambush just then.

It would have been very foolish of him to lead his friends along the trail past the rocks after hearing what he had.

"Just get dinner ready as soon as you can, Wing," he said. "Then we'll fix up something to fool those fellows. I think it would be a good idea to send you ahead and see if they would shoot you."

"Me no likee!" cried the Chinaman, holding up his hands in fear. "Makee my blother go! He no 'flaid of bad Melican mans."

Hop was shrewd enough to understand that Wild was only joking.

Taking advantage of it, he promptly spoke up:

"Me no 'flaid; me lide past um locks, an' when um badee galoots shootee at me, me shootee back, allee samee Misler Wild!"

Then he pulled a big six-shooter, and strutted around the camp in imitation of a Chinese general.

Wing turned away in disgust, for he saw our friends laughing, and that told him that Wild had not meant what he said.

He hurried up the meal, however, and a few minutes later they were eating.

Broiled sage-hens and partridges, fried bacon, corn bread, and coffee made up the bill of fare, and as there was plenty of it they all ate heartily.

"I like this better than ther tavern," said Ralph Cooley, as he emptied his tin cup of coffee. "There's nothin' like livin' out in ther open air in Arizony. There's ther blue sky overhead, an' ther green of ther trees around yer, while ther smell of ther wild flowers comes ter your nose an' makes yer feel as though yer was in Fairyland sometimes. Of course, a feller don't want ter set out in ther hot sun an' eat his dinner, but there's plenty of trees ter give ther shade yer want. Jest look over there! Ain't that as putty a sight as ever ther eyes of a mortal galoot ever seen?"

He pointed to a broad stretch of wooded country off to the right, and the rugged mountains in the background.

The sky was perfect, and the fleecy white clouds that crossed the blue vault contrasted with the different tints of green of the foliage and the gray and brown of the rocky sides of the mountain.

It certainly was a splendid scene, but it was old to our friends.

They assured him, however, that nothing could beat the scenery of Arizona, providing you looked in the right part of it.

Deserts of alkali sand and miles and miles of thorny cacti formed a great part of the territory.

But even then the sunsets were something grand to look at.

The prospector soon changed the subject, for he saw that Young Wild West was getting ready to make some

kind of a move against the villains who were waiting to shoot them down from ambush.

"What are yer goin' ter do?" he asked, anxiously.

"I am going over there and surprise them from behind," was the reply. "Then I will give them two minutes to take the back trail for Hard Scratch. If they don't do it I'll just show them how fast I can make them drop."

CHAPTER VII.

OUR FRIENDS REACH THE CAVERN.

Wild now took his rifle and left the camp.

He started in the woods and up a little hill in a direction that would lead him to a spot back of the place where the villains had left their horses.

The boy was ready for business, for now that he was certain that the villains meant to shoot them down from ambush, it was necessary for him to protect himself and companions.

Tombstone Tom and his friends were very close to death at that very moment, though they were not aware of it.

While they were waiting for those they had marked as their victims to come along and be shot down, the very one they wanted the most was approaching them from behind with a deadly Winchester rifle in his hand.

Wild had no difficulty in getting through the woods, and he had judged the distance to a nicety.

He was not more than two minutes in reaching the strip where the horses of the gang were standing.

Then the daring young deadshot crept up, and was soon within twenty feet of the five men sitting behind the rocks.

He looked at them in silence for a moment.

Then he decided to make known his presence.

But before he could do so he heard Red Runyon say in a low tone of voice:

"It's about time they came along, unless they're goin' ter take it easy fur a while, boys."

"Oh, they'll come putty soon, Tombstone Tom retorted. "Jest remember, now! Young Wild West is goin' ter be my meat. I want ter drop him myself. I've got a good place ter rest my arm here, an' I can't possibly miss, 'cause they're bound ter come so close that a feller could almost shoot 'em with his eyes shut. Ther very minute that I fire the rest of yer kin give it ter 'em. Shoot down everybody but ther gals. No one will ever know what happened ter Young Wild West an' his party, then, fur we'll see ter it that ther gals never gits where they kin tell anyone as would like ter know. Now, jest——"

Wild could stand it no longer, and he interrupted the scoundrel by crying out in a ringing voice:

"Stand up, Tombstone Tom!"

It was a peculiar command, but before he scarcely set eyes on the one who uttered it Tombstone Tom was on his feet.

He knew the voice of the young deadshot only too well. Wild stood behind a rock that was about waist-high, and the eyes of all five of the villains were now turned upon him.

They were amazed beyond measure.

"I have heard just what you galoots were talking about," went on Wild, "and I am in just the humor to shoot you down! Which of you wants to die first?"

There was no reply to this, but it seemed that Coxey was the one.

He fired a shot with remarkable quickness, and then tried to dive behind a rock.

But he was not quick enough.

Even as Wild heard the bullet whistle past his head he turned his rifle upon the villain and fired.

Coxey dropped on his face.

It was the last drop he would ever make, too.

The smoking muzzle of the rifle was leveled so it could be turned upon either of the others, and they stood there like statues.

"Who is the next?" the young deadshot asked in his cool and easy way.

It seemed remarkable that a single boy could stand there facing four villainous men, each of whom was armed, and hold them under subjection.

But they knew how well he could shoot, and they dared not trust themselves.

That accounted for it.

"We wasn't doin' nothin' ter you," Red Runyon presently found words to say.

"No, you had not started yet. But there is no use in trying to crawl out of it, but just thank your stars that you are still living."

"Don't shoot agin, please," spoke up Hank Mosley.

"Ah! you are not anxious to die, then?"

"No one is, I reckon."

"But you wanted to shoot us all down in cold blood—you were anxious to do that!"

"Well, I, for one, ain't anxious ter do it now."

"Oh, no! That seems funny, don't it? Well, I am going to give you four scoundrels a show for your lives. Just mount your horses and ride off somewhere, so I will never set eyes on you again. I assure you that if I ever do see you again, and you are acting in anything like a suspicious way, I will shoot you down as I would a mad coyote."

The four men looked very much relieved.

"Now I will step back into the woods, and then I want to see how quick you fellows can get into the saddle. Ride over the back trail when you go, too. I want you to pass our camp."

"Ain't yer goin' ter give us a chance ter bury our dead pard?" Jake Mosley asked, as he looked at the silent figure on the ground.

"Well, yes. I suppose that would be proper. It will save someone else the trouble, too. Go ahead and bury

him. I'll give you just twenty minutes to do the job, and then ride past our camp over the back trail."

With that Wild dropped back into the bushes and started around for the spot he had left his friends at.

He knew that the four villains would do just as he had told them.

But what they might do after was another thing.

Charlie and Jim were right at the bend in the trail, for when they heard the two shots fired they had rushed out to be on hand.

They had seen the four men standing there among the rocks, but had been unable to catch a glimpse of Wild.

But they knew he must be all right.

It was not until he called out to them that they were aware that he was coming back.

Then they hurried to the camp, and got there the same time he did.

"What did yer do?" asked the scout. "It was your rifle that spoke, I reckon."

"Yes, that's right, Charlie," was the reply.

"Yer dropped one of ther galoots, then?"

"Yes, I had to, or he would have dropped me. He sent a bullet mighty close to my head, as it was. If he had had another chance he might have succeeded. I didn't give him the other chance."

Wild then told them just what had occurred.

"They will be along here in a few minutes," he added. "We will keep a sharp watch on them when they go by, for there is no telling but that they may take a notion to risk firing on us. They might think they would have a chance to get away because they will be mounted, and ready to make a dash."

Our friends now got ready to move, for they meant to go on as soon as the villains rode by.

It was not more than twenty minutes after Wild gave them their orders when Tombstone Tom and the other three scoundrels appeared.

They had their horses on a walk, and appeared to be very meek and docile.

"You galoots will be wise if you make this the last time we will ever set eyes on you," said Young Wild West, as they rode by. "You ought to be very thankful that you are alive."

There was no reply to this.

But the expression on the face of the Terror told plainly that he did not intend that it should be the last time they would meet.

When they were out of sight Wild gave the word, and all mounted.

Then they proceeded on their way for the wonderful cavern Cooley had told them about.

Cooley was delighted at the way the villains had been handled.

"I reckon that's about ther best I ever seen done," he declared. "Young Wild West, you sartinly know how ter handle sich fellers. I wish I was as cool as you, an' could shoot half as straight."

"Well, if you try hard you can improve yourself in both ways, I suppose," was the reply. "It is easy enough to keep cool, if you only make up your mind that you are going to do it."

"But it has got ter be born in yer, too, I reckon."

"Well, maybe it has, to a certain extent. But there is always room for improvement. If you can't be cool, why, be as cool as you can," and our hero laughed.

"That's somethin' like ther Irishman said, ain't it?"

"Yes, only he made it the word 'easy,' instead of 'cool.'"

They kept a watch behind them as they made their way over the trail.

It was a trail that was not used a great deal by travelers, and, consequently, it was pretty rough traveling, for the most part.

But the horses were well used to that sort of ground, so there was no real difficulty experienced.

It was about three in the afternoon when Cooley pointed to a high ridge in the distance that was broken in the center so as to almost form the shape of a letter U.

"There's where ther cavern is," he said. "I reckon we'll be there inside of an hour now."

"Yes, I guess we can make that distance in an hour, all right," Wild replied.

It was a wild and picturesque scene that lay before them now.

Not a thing that indicated the least signs of civilization could be seen.

There was an arid plain off to the left, and to the right could be seen the rolling prairie that was well covered with a growth of green grass.

Ahead and behind them were naught but peaks and curiously formed rocks, with here and there a growth of trees common to the semi-tropics.

The trail wound its way along steep precipices and other dangerous places, but their horses were sure-footed, so nothing was to be feared on that score.

In a trifle less than an hour they came to the place Cooley had pointed out.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "Now, I reckon, we kin pick out a campin' spot. There's ther mouth of ther big cavern, right over there. Yer can't see that it is a cavern till yer git right up ter it, though, fur that big high rock stands right in front of it. No one would ever think there was sich a place there, unless he stopped an' looked behind that rock."

They all dismounted, and then Wild and Arietta led the way to the rock.

They found it exactly as the prospector had said.

The rock, which was of a reddish brown in color and of the sandstone variety, reared itself squarely before a big opening that was large enough for a team to drive through.

But it was so close to the opening that it would have been impossible for the team to get to it.

If such a thing was tried it would be necessary to remove the rock first.

But a single horse could be led in by making a sharp turn.

Wild looked around, and saw that there was a convenient spot to pitch their camp not more than thirty yards from the big rock.

A stream that was rather small, but large enough to supply them with more water than they could possibly use, trickled from the high bluff above, and then lost itself in a narrow rift in the rocks some distance away.

There was plenty of grass, and the mesquite bushes were plenty near the spot where the water came down.

"This will do, all right," our hero said. "Wing, you and Hop get the pack-horses unloaded, and we'll put up the tents right against the face of the cliff there."

Cooley wanted to help them, but they would not hear to it.

His wounded shoulder would hinder him in the work, and they could very well get along without him.

It was not long before the camp was in shape, for they had a system of doing things, and as it had been practiced so many times, it was quite easy.

"Now, ther first thing yer know we'll miss ther galoot of a Hop," said Charlie. "He's got that bottle of tanglefoot what ther landlord of ther Red Hot tavern give him, an' he won't be satisfied till he's put it inside of him."

"Well, I am not going to say a word now, and if he does go to drinking, so as to make a beast of himself, I'll give him a little scare. I have been pretty easy with him for some time now. I don't mind a fellow drinking whisky if he wants a little now and then, but I haven't any use for one who gets drunk just for the fun of it."

"An' that's what Hop will do every time he gits ther chance," said the scout.

"Well, he don't always drink enough to make him out of the way much. If he wants to take a swallow now and then from that bottle I don't object, but if he starts to make a spree of it I'll shoot the bottle out of his hands, that's all."

Charlie judged the Chinaman right, for he was simply itching to sample the present the tavern-keeper had given him.

He did not think he was being watched, but he was.

The camp was no sooner put in proper shape than Hop disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOP'S REMARKABLE ADVENTURE IN THE CAVERN.

Hop had been listening to a great deal that had been said about the cavern and the underground stream.

He was not interested in it much, but he decided to go in the place as soon as he got the chance.

And when he went in he meant to take the bottle of liquor with him.

"Me havee lillee dlink in um biggee cave," he thought. "Misler Wild no findee."

So he watched his chance and managed to elude those who had been keeping an eye on him, and get into the cave.

It was dark in there, of course, but Hop carefully took his bearings, and made his way to one of the many passages that seemed to open in all directions.

He found a convenient place to sit down, and then he proceeded to take the cork from the bottle.

This was an easy thing, since he carried a corkscrew. He took a taste of the contents, and then smacked his lips.

"Misler Charlie likee havee some of lis," he muttered, with a grin, "but he no gittee."

Then he took a good pull at the bottle.

Hop was just about to replace the cork and wait a while before he tackled the tanglefoot again when something unexpected happened.

A hand suddenly reached out and took possession of the bottle.

"Hip-hi!" exclaimed the startled Chinaman. "Whattée mattee?"

"Chinee heap much fool! Shut up!" exclaimed a voice, and then an Indian, holding a revolver pointed at him, stepped before him in the gloom.

But it was not so dark there but that Hop could see him distinctly.

"Whattée want?" he asked, recovering himself quickly and deciding to try and get the best of the redskin by talking to him.

"Chinee heap much fool; shut up!" the Indian repeated.

"Havee lillee dlink?" Hop asked, just as though it was he who had the bottle, and not the redskin.

"Ugh! Injun like firewater."

"Velly goodee tanglefoot; havee lillee dlink," said Hop.

He did not want to lose the whisky, and he thought by being pleasant to his unexpected visitor he might be able to get it from him.

The redskin squatted down before him, still keeping his pistol pointed at him.

Then he quietly slipped the cork from the bottle, and tossed it away in the darkness.

That plainly signified that there would be no need of corking the bottle when he got through with it.

"Chinee keep still, or Injun shoot!" he said, and then he tipped the bottle and let the contents run down his throat.

There had been but a scant quart in it when Hop opened it, and he had not swallowed as much as half a pint himself.

But the redskin did not stop until he had drained the bottle.

Then he tossed it away into the passage, and a crash told that it had been broken into fragments.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Now Chinee come with me!"

"Me no likee!" protested Hop, who was more sore over losing his tanglefoot than he was frightened.

"Chinee come with Injun!" repeated the redskin.

"Me no likee!" protested Hop, getting real frightened now.

"Chinee shut up!"

The Indian thrust the muzzle of his pistol against the head of his prisoner now, and Hop obeyed.

He followed the redskin—or rather he was dragged along by him—through the passage.

It was so dark in there that neither of them could see a foot before them, but the Indian evidently knew where he was going.

After a turn to the left had been made Hop's captor gave a grunt and came to a halt.

"Me tie your hands," he said. "If Chinee no want to die he will hold his hands behind him."

Then was the chance for the Celestial to knock the weapon from the redskin's hand and run for his life.

But he did not take it.

As smart as he was in the majority of things, Hop was not up to snuff when there was a revolver leveled at his head.

He feared that the weapon might go off, and in that case his earthly career would be ended.

He put his hands just where they were wanted, and then in less than a minute he was rendered helpless, as far as they were concerned.

He still had the use of his feet, and he could have called for help if he tried.

But if he did that he thought the Indian would surely kill him, and Hop Wah, the Chinese magician, hoped to live a long while yet.

Having secured his captive so he could not put up a fight, or do him any harm, the redskin felt around on a little ledge at the side of the passage and soon found a pitch-pine torch.

He struck a match and soon had the torch burning.

Hop was now terrified.

"Lettee poor Chinee go!" he pleaded in a very low voice, for he felt that he dared not make too much noise.

"Chinee shut up, or Injun kill!" was the reply.

There was no help for it, so Hop was conducted through the passage, which turned this way and that, until finally, at the end of five minutes, the sound of rushing water could be heard.

As frightened as he was, the Chinaman thought of the underground stream he had heard Wild and the rest talking about, and he felt that he was being led to it.

He had listened attentively when it was related by Ralph Cooley how the Indian he had fought with had jumped into the black waters and gone to his death.

Naturally it occurred to Hop that he was to be thrown into the black current, and he began to tremble.

Something like a chuckle came from the lips of the redskin.

It was evident that he enjoyed the fear his captive was showing.

Nothing pleases an Indian better than to see cowardice displayed by one not belonging to his own race.

"Chinee heap much 'fraid," he said, contemptuously.

"Me no likee," answered Hop. "Me velly good Chinee."

In less than a minute later they came to the brink of a roaring stream.

The Indian came to a halt and dropped upon his knee.

"Chinee see?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Hop; "me see, but me no likee."

Then it suddenly occurred to him that he must get away from his captor.

He noticed that the redskin no longer had his pistol in his hand.

He had thrust it back in his belt.

Hop thought quickly.

In order to make his escape he must hurl the redskin into the water!

It would be no easy task to do this, since his hands were bound behind him.

But there were more ways than one.

The Celestial could buck pretty well, and he was very active for one of his race.

He made up his mind what to do in a second.

"Me no likee water," he said, getting ready for the effort he was going to make.

The redskin grunted.

Bump!

As quick as a wink Hop lowered his head and butted the redskin in the ribs.

Then his left foot swung around and tripped him.

Splash!

The Indian had vanished, for the black waters had swallowed him up.

The torch went with him, so the Chinaman was in Stygian darkness.

But one thing about Hop was that he always took note of the direction he was going.

He knew which way he had come, for as the torch went into the water he had turned and looked into the passage.

He now walked slowly in that direction.

He got a bump against an angle of rock, but a step to the left and he was in a passage.

Then he started slowly ahead.

For five minutes he went along at a snail's pace, every now and then bumping against a part of the cavern.

After what seemed a long time, though it was only a few minutes, the Chinaman suddenly saw the light of day ahead.

"Hip-hi! Hoolay!" he yelled. "Me allee light now."

"Hello, you heathen!" called out the voice of Cheyenne Charlie.

Hop then stepped out of the passage into the cavern near the opening, and saw the scout standing there.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Charlie. "Wild said he bet you'd come in here!"

"Me velly glad to gittee out, Misler Charlie," said Hop, as he hurried to him.

"What in thunder is ther matter with yer?" cried the scout. "Blamed if yer ain't got your hands tied behind yer! Who done that?"

"Ledskin catchee and tie um hands," replied Hop. "Me havee velly badee timee."

Charlie ran and caught the Chinaman by the arm.

There was no mistake about it; he was tied.

Whipping out his knife, he cut him loose, and then hustled him out of the cavern into the light of day.

"Here he is!" he cried. "Ther heathen galoot was in ther cavern all ther time. An Injun had him, he said, an' I reckon it must have been somethin' like that, fur his hands was tied."

Young Wild West and the rest looked astonished.

They had looked all around for the Chinaman when they missed him, but had not gone into the cavern.

Wild, however, had declared that he must have gone in there to drink the whisky he had, and after a while Charlie had gone in to look for him.

He had been just in time to see him coming out.

It had been decided that they would wait until morning to make an exploration of the cave, since the wound on the shoulder of Ralph Cooley pained him some from the ride he had coming from Hard Scratch that day.

Cooley declared that he was all right, but Wild knew that a rest over night would be the proper thing for him.

When the prospector heard that an Indian had captured the Chinaman he was much interested.

Hop soon told his story.

He elaborated a little on it, for he did not want to acknowledge that he was afraid when he was forced to go through the passage with the redskin.

Cheyenne Charlie looked sharply at Hop as he finished his remarkable story.

"Do yer mean ter tell us that yer butted ther Injun inter ther underground stream?" he asked.

"Yes, Misler Charlie," was the reply. "Me buttee in um libs; len me upsette with um foot, an' Injun falliee in um water. Len me findee way outee, velly glad me livee."

"Then there was more than two of 'em around here," remarked Cooley. "There must be somethin' in that cavern that they don't want anyone ter know about, an' there's no mistake about that!"

"Well, I'll guarantee that we'll know something about it before we get through," said our hero. "Of course, I don't want to interfere with any Apaches who may be here, but I guess we have as much right to go into that underground place as they have."

"Certainly we have."

"I want to see that underground stream," spoke up Arietta. "I have seen two or three of them, and I always think there is something grim and inspiring about them."

They flow to no one knows where, for the outlets can never be found."

"They go on down to the center of the earth, I guess, Et," spoke up Wild, laughing.

"Well, they might, for all we know," the girl answered, seriously. "The fact that you see a black stream of water rushing toward the very bowels of the earth is enough to make one wonder where the outlet is. I want to learn all I can about the underground stream in the cavern before we go away."

"All right, Et; we'll try and give you a show to make a good study of it."

"One thing about it, Hop didn't get tight on the whisky," observed Jim. "The Indian took it away from him. If he had waited a little while he might have been able to pick him up and carry him through the passage without his knowing it."

Hop shook his head sadly.

"Me no likee Injun," he said. "He dlink um tanglefoot and len bleak um bottle."

"Well, that part of it serves you right," spoke up Arietta. "The next time you get hold of a bottle of liquor you will know how to use it, perhaps."

"Yes; me dlinkee up soonee me git um, allee samee before you say Jackee Lobinson!" was the quick reply.

This caused a laugh, and Arietta decided that there was no use in trying to break the Chinaman of the habit of drinking.

It was now getting near supper time, so Wing got to work and started a fire.

It was just then that a shot rang out from the mouth of the cave, and Hop let out a yell.

CHAPTER IX.

ARIETTA'S DETERMINATION.

Young Wild West saw the flash as the shot was fired, and not stopping to see whether Hop was badly hurt or not, he darted around the opposite side of the rock.

Crack!

A bullet whistled past his head, and then it was that he saw an Indian in the act of turning to run into the cavern.

Crack!

It was Wild who fired this time.

He did not shoot to kill, however; he simply wanted to stop the redskin, for he thought he might learn something by taking him alive.

The bullet from his revolver grazed the Indian's neck and he promptly dropped.

Before he found out that he was not hurt Wild was upon him.

A quick blow between the eyes and the redskin fell back dazed.

Then Wild grabbed his wrist and wrenched the revolver from him.

"I guess I've got you, old fellow," he said, as he caught

him by the throat. "Just take it easy, now, or you may get hurt."

Charlie and Jim came rushing around the rock at that moment, and as soon as they saw that Wild had the fellow they sprang to his assistance.

In less than a minute the Indian was dragged out into the open air.

The rest of our friends gathered around as he was lifted to his feet.

"Thunder!" gasped Ralph Cooley; "if it ain't ther red galoot what jumped inter ther underground stream, I'm a sick coyote!"

"Allee samee ledskin what me knockee in um underground stleam lillee while ago," said Hop, stepping forward, for he had only lost a lock of his hair by the bullet that had been sent at him.

Wild looked at the two in a puzzled way.

That they were both in deadly earnest he could plainly tell.

But he thought that both must be mistaken.

"I guess this isn't the fellow who cut you with the ax, Cooley," he said. "Redskins look alike, as a rule, especially when you see them in the dark."

"It is the same fellow," declared the prospector, shaking his head to show that he was positive. "I know ther galoot's looks too well ter make a mistake. It's ther redskin what jumped in ther underground stream ter save himself from gittin' a bullet from me."

"Allee samee ledskin what me knockee in um water," Hop added. "Me no foollee, so be."

"Ah, you don't know one redskin from another, Hop," exclaimed Charlie. "If this galoot was knocked inter ther water, an' ther place is anything like you an' Cooley says it is, he must have drowned himself; an' if he got drowned how could he be here?"

"He mustee gittee out allee samee putty quick. See, him allee wettee flom um water."

"That's right," nodded Wild. "I found out that he was dripping wet when I tackled him. The red galoot has just come out of the water, and no mistake."

"And that means that both Hop and Mr. Cooley are right, when they say it is the same one," spoke up Arietta. "There must be a way to get back into the cavern from the underground stream. That sounds plausible, for underground streams are curious things, and anything is liable to happen if a person gets into one."

"But the surest thing ter happen would be ter drown," Charlie declared. "That galoot never was in no underground stream, I'll bet."

The Indian had been listening to what was said with stolid indifference, but the remark of the scout caused a faint smile to play about his lips.

As an Indian is not given much to smiling, Wild made up his mind that there was something in what Arietta claimed.

"Bring him over here and tie him to the tree, boys," he

said, pointing out the tree that was close to the fire Wing had just kindled.

Charlie and Jim hustled the prisoner there and soon had him bound so it was impossible for him to escape.

"Now," observed the dashing young deadshot, looking the prisoner squarely in the eyes, "I want to know why you shot at the Chinaman just now. If you don't speak the truth you will be a dead redskin inside of ten minutes."

"Ugh!" grunted the redskin; "paleface heap much talk; me no talk."

"I guess you'll talk before the ten minutes are up," and with that Wild put a fresh cartridge in his revolver and then stepped back a pace and leveled it at the Indian's breast.

"You tried to kill the Chinaman, and then you shot at me," he said, coolly. "That makes it lawful in this country for me to kill you, because you are too far away from a court of justice. I am going to shoot you dead if you don't answer the questions I put to you. Do you feel like living, or do you want to make a quick journey to the Happy Hunting Grounds?"

The boy acted as though he surely meant to keep his word and kill the Indian, for he had a way of doing it and could fool a person very quickly.

Of course he would not have been guilty of shooting a helpless prisoner, no matter what crime he had committed.

But the redskin must have thought it would be all up with him if he did not do as he was told, for he very quickly said:

"Me no like palefaces here."

Hop was suddenly struck with an idea, and, walking up to the captive, placed his nose close to his mouth for a second or two.

Then he jumped back and gave a nod of satisfaction.

"Me no makee mistakee," he exclaimed; "me smell tanglefoot. Ledskin dlink my tanglefoot."

"Great gimlets! ther heathen has been smellin' of ther redskin's breath," the scout exclaimed. "That is what I call putty good. I'll try it myself."

He stepped up and tried it, and then he knew pretty surely that the prisoner had been drinking whisky.

That made it look as though it really was the fellow Hop had knocked into the underground stream.

Wild watched the redskin's face while all this was going on.

He remained stoical, just as though it was of no concern to him.

"What did you steal the Chinaman's firewater for?" our hero asked him, suddenly.

"Injun like firewater," was the reply.

"Well, after you got his firewater what made you make him go with you for?"

"Me want Chineese cook for me."

This was admission enough to prove that Hop was right in what he said.

But Wild did not stop there.

"What did you try to kill that man for?" he asked, pointing at Cooley.

"Paleface man try to kill me," was the reply.

"But you wanted him to go out of the cavern here. Why did you want him to do that?"

"Palefaces no right there; Chinees no right there. Apaches only go in the big cave."

"Ah! I see. Well, you will change your mind, won't you, about that? How about letting us all go in and look around? We want to see the water that you jumped in and got knocked in, and yet you didn't get drowned. You shouldn't object to that. We are not after the gold the Apaches have got stowed away in the cavern."

The redskin had been trying to appear very indifferent, but this seemed to be too much for him, and he gave a start and looked at Wild as though he could scarcely believe that he had heard aright.

"You have got a lot of gold hidden in there," went on our hero, who knew he had scored a point, "and if you are the only one who knows it is there what do you care, anyhow? Why don't you take out what you want of it and go and become civilized?"

At this the redskin shook his head.

"Paleface boy heap much talk," he said.

"Well, I am only talking what is right. You know you have made a big mistake, and you ought to be glad that I spared your life, for I could have shot you dead if I had wanted to."

The Apache looked at his arm that had been grazed by Wild's bullet.

The blood had just been drawn, and that was all.

"Paleface boy try to kill, but he no hit in right place," he said.

"Oh! If you think that way I will show you that you are wrong. I can hit anything I shoot at. Just watch this."

Wild picked up a stone that was no larger than an egg and tossed it almost straight in the air.

Then out came his revolver and he fired two shots at it in succession.

The Apache opened wide his eyes, for he could tell that the stone had been hit by both bullets.

When it dropped to the ground our hero picked it up and showed him where the bullets had hit it and flattened out.

"I guess you think I could have dropped you for fair now, don't you?" he asked.

"Paleface boy heap much good shoot."

"Yes, I can shoot straight, redskin. I am Young Wild West."

Then it was that the Indian gave a start.

It was evident that he had heard of the young deadshot, but had never met him before.

"Young Wild West make heap much fight with Apaches," he said with a sort of grunt.

"Yes, I have fought the Apaches a few times, and I always won out, too. You would be a fool to fight us, for

I would shoot you before you had time to sing half a line of your death song. Now if you will promise to go away and not bother us I will let you go."

"He won't keep his promise if he makes one," spoke up Jim Dart.

"No! ther measly coyote would shoot us down ther first chance he got. He'd be as treacherous as them galoots what followed us from Hard Scratch was," declared the scout.

"Injun go away, but he come back," said the Apache, slowly.

For a wonder he did not try to deceive them by making a promise he did not mean to keep.

"I tell you what to do," spoke up Cooley. "You don't seem to think I am fit to go in the cavern with you to-night, so we will keep the redskin until morning, and then we'll take him in there with us. It may be that he'll show us somethin' about ther place that would be interestin'."

"That is a good idea, I guess," said Wild. "Redskin, you can make up your mind that you're going to be a prisoner for a while. It isn't safe to let you go, for you would only be trying to take our lives if we stay around here, which we mean to do."

The Apache shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

He did not like the idea of remaining a prisoner, but he was not the one to beg for his life or liberty.

Wild told Charlie and Jim to fix him so he would be able to sit or lie down, if he wished, and then he turned his attention to the supper that was nearly ready.

The scout and Dart soon had the redskin fixed so he was sure to stay there, and then they turned their attention to the supper also.

It was now near six o'clock, and as they were all hungry, they thought it time to eat.

After the meal was over Arietta thought she would try her luck at questioning the prisoner.

She walked over to him, accompanied by Anna and Eloise.

"How is it that you have decided to be a bad Indian?" she asked.

"Injun no bad," was the reply.

"But you tried to kill a man with an ax the other day, and only a short time ago you shot at our Chinese servant and then at Young Wild West. They would not do a thing to harm you. You certainly are a bad Indian, or you would not act like that."

"Paleface maiden talk much," the Apache retorted, evidently not knowing what else to say.

"But I want you to tell me what there is in the cavern that you do not want us to find. Come, you may as well tell, for it cannot hurt you any."

"Paleface maiden heap much pretty," was the reply.

"Well, that is all right. But tell me about the water that goes rushing under the rocks in the dark. What is there beyond the place where it goes out of sight?"

"Only what belongs to the Apaches, paleface maiden; the palefaces must not go there."

"Well, I am going there."

The captive redskin looked at her curiously.

"You no afraid, then?" he said.

"No, I am not afraid. I am going to find out the secret of the underground stream."

The Apache nodded gravely.

"If the paleface maiden go there she will find gold," he answered.

"Good!"

Then the redskin shrugged his shoulders, as though he was sorry he had said as much.

Arietta questioned him further, but could get nothing more from him.

"Wait until we go into the cavern," she said to Anna and Eloise. "I will find out what is there that the Indian does not want us to trouble."

CHAPTER X.

THE VILLAINS STILL LOOK FOR REVENGE.

As the reader no doubt supposes, Tombstone Tom and his three remaining friends did not intend to give up hunting down Young Wild West.

If anything, they were more bitter than ever toward the daring young deadshot.

They only rode half a mile back on the trail and then they came to a halt and dismounted.

"Well, boys, I reckon we got it worse than ever that time," the Terror observed, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"If we didn't git it good an' hard no one ever did!" Red Runyon exclaimed.

The Mosley Brothers nodded and shrugged their shoulders.

They were thinking of what had happened to Coxey.

"I want to ask you fellows if this ain't enough ter make us foller Young Wild West till we git him?" Tombstone Tom went on to say.

"It are," said Red Runyon; "an' yer kin count on me ter stick to yer till ther job is finished."

"Me, too," cried Hank Mosley.

"An' yer kin bet I'll stick!" chimed in Jake, his brother. "I jest thought a whole lot of Coxey, 'cause he was a mighty good feller. I'm goin' ter git revenge fur his death."

"That's ther way ter talk, boys!" and the Terror brightened up wonderfully.

"We'll jest make it hot fur 'em afore to-morrer mornin'," remarked the red-whiskered villain. "They must have money with 'em, as you say, Tom. Ther chances is that they've got a pile of it, too. That will pay us fur ther trouble we'll have."

"But it won't bring poor Coxey back ter life," added Jake.

"We've all got ter die," said his brother, shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, an' we might all die putty soon, if Young Wild West happens ter draw a bead on us," was the retort.

"We ain't goin' ter let him have ther chance," said Tom. "We must be mighty particular how we act this time. Most likely Young Wild West an' his people thinks we've gone on back ter Hard Scratch."

"Sartin they do," declared Red Runyon. "They think we've got enough of it, I reckon. But we ain't hardly got started. If we could only find them two redskins what's friends of yours, Tom!"

"I don't know where they kin be," was the leader's reply. "They've got a hangout in a big cave fifteen or twenty miles from here, an' sometimes they're around there, an' sometimes they ain't. There's somethin' funny about them two redskins, too. They don't want ter mix with anybody, not even other Injuns. But they think a pile of me, 'cause I give one of 'em whisky one day an' saved him from ther bite of a rattler. They'll do anything I ask 'em."

"Then if we could only find 'em we might git 'em ter sneak up on Young Wild West's camp to-night an' pop him over," said Runyon. "If that could be did we'd have an easy time of it, I reckon. We ought ter be able ter take care of ther rest of 'em all right."

"Yes, I think that would be a good plan, Red. We'll try an' find ther redskins."

"But we'll foller right along behind our intended victims, though."

"Yes, we'll sartinly do that."

The villains waited for a full hour before they mounted and proceeded along the trail.

Even then they were very cautious when they came in sight of the spot where our friends had halted at noon.

When they found there was no one there they rode on, keeping a sharp lookout ahead.

They knew if they rode at a very fast pace they would overtake the party, and as they did not want to do this, they kept at a pretty slow pace.

In this way they finally neared the big cavern.

Tombstone Tom knew where it was, and when they finally came to the top of a little hill he halted and took a look ahead.

He was not long in noticing that a couple of tents had been pitched near the big rock that hid the mouth of the cavern from view.

"Hanged if Young Wild West ain't stopped right where I expected ter find ther two redskins!" he exclaimed. "That's mighty funny, ain't it?"

"I reckon it is," retorted Red Runyon, stroking his beard, thoughtfully. "I wonder if they come here on purpose?"

"What do yer mean by that?" Tom asked in surprise.

"Well, it sorter struck me that they had an object in comin' here. They're with ther galoot what got hurt, yer know. I heard Jack Pepper at ther Red Hot Tavern say

as how ther galoot got cut with an ax in a fight with a couple of Injuns. It might be that your friends is ther same Injuns that done it."

"By jingo! I never thought of that, Red. It is as likely as not that they've come here fur that. Young Wild West wants ter hunt ther Injuns up an' drop 'em, I s'pose. He's always after bad Injuns, or white galoots what don't do things jest right. He's an awful meddlesome young feller, an' he's got a way that makes ordinary folks like him."

"I reckon we ain't ordinary folks, then," spoke up Jake Mosley.

"Well, we ain't, are we?" Tom hastened to say.

"No! I reckon not!" exclaimed Hank. "We're what some folks would call villains."

"But we're jest as good as anyone, fur all that," added Red Runyon.

"Never mind about what we are, boys. It would take a long while ter argue it out, I s'pose. We'll find a place as close as we dare ter go ter Young Wild West's camp, an' then we'll stop there. "I think I know jest ther place. Foller me."

The leader now left the trail our friends had taken and turned to the left.

The others followed, and, keeping along a ledge that swung around the face of a cliff, they rode until they came to the high piece of ground that was between them and the camp near the mouth of the cavern.

The cavern itself was located in a part of the mountain that sloped down in the back into a deep gorge that was impossible to be reached, to all appearances.

The five men rode around this and finally came to a halt at a point that was not more than two hundred yards in a straight line from the camp of our friends.

But in order to reach it they would have to cross a narrow ledge and then work around to the trail, making a distance of probably a quarter of a mile.

Tombstone Tom had no sooner dismounted than he was ascending a hill to get a view of the camp.

As soon as he had accomplished his purpose he gave a quick look and came down.

"Hanged if they ain't got one of my Injun friends a prisoner!" he exclaimed.

"What?" said Red Runyon, looking incredulously at him.

"It's a fact, Red. They've got ther very Injun I saved from dyin' from ther rattlesnake bite. I know him so well that I couldn't make a mistake in him. It's Red Snake, ther 'Pache, as sure as I'm standin' here!"

The men looked at him in silence for a moment.

"I told yer so," said Red Runyon, after a pause. "They come out here ter hunt down ther two Injuns what give it ter ther galoot that's with 'em. Most likely they've killed ther other Injun."

"Well, it's all right. We'll see ter it if we can't find a way ter git ther prisoner free. If we only could he'd be ready to do anything we wanted him to. Jest wait, boys."

The five villains fixed up as good a camp as they could.

They did not have much with them, but they were used to roughing it, and the blankets they had to sleep on and the frying-pan and coffee-pot were quite enough.

Red Runyon had seen to it to bring along a few supplies, so they were not going hungry.

"I want some coffee, boys," he said. "But I don't s'pose it will do ter make a fire till after dark, or them people over there will see ther smoke. They won't be able ter see either ther smoke or ther light from ther fire after it gits dark, 'cause ther hill will shut off ther view all right, an' ther smoke will git up among ther clouds without bein' seen."

The same tiny stream that supplied our friends with water ran along close to the spot they had halted at and the vegetation and grass was as rank there as it was over near the big rock in front of the cavern.

As they had taken their time in getting to the spot, it was close to sunset when they found that Young Wild West and his friends were camped so close by, and it would not be a very long time before they would have a chance to light their fire.

The sun set and darkness gradually came on.

At length they thought the time had arrived to go ahead and get something cooked for their evening meal.

Red Runyon acted as the cook, and when he got the fire going and the coffee over the blaze he gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

They had some meat with them, which had been smoked, so it would not take long to cook it over the coals.

This, with the biscuits they had brought along from the store in the mining camp, would make them a good meal.

In fact, it would be as good as they were in the habit of getting in the camp.

"If we only had a little liquor now we would be all right," observed Tombstone Tom. "It is too bad we didn't think ter git half a gallon afore we left Hard Scratch."

"There's only one thing that hurts me, fellers," spoke up Jake Mosley, "an' that is that poor Coxey ain't here. It's a blamed shame that he had ter go an' git his medicine from Young Wild West."

"There's no use talkin' about that, Jake," said his brother. "What's done can't be undone."

"Yes; but we kin make ther young feller suffer fur it, though."

"An' that's what we will do, too," remarked Tombstone Tom.

"I'm willin' ter sneak over there an' try an' git revenge now," said Jake.

"You are willin' ter do that?" the Terror asked, looking at him sharply.

"Yes."

"S'pose yer go over there putty soon an' try an' see if yer can't git ther redskin loose? I reckon that would be ther best way ter git at ther business."

"Do yer mean it, Jake, when yer say yer want ter go over there?" asked the man's brother.

"Yes, I mean it," was the reply.

"I'm afraid you're a little hot-headed, an' yer may git shot if yer try ter down Young Wild West."

"Well, I won't try ter do that jest now; I'm goin' ter try an' git that Injun free, jest as Tom says."

"I don't think you're hardly ther right one ter do that, either."

"What makes yer think that?"

"Oh, you git excited over any little thing, an' it might be that you'd git killed, anyhow. I reckon I'd be ther one ter do ther job."

"Do you want ter go, Hank?" asked Tombstone Tom.

"Yes," was the reply.

"I'd like ter go myself," spoke up Red Runyon.

"Yer would, hey, Red? Well, I've got a notion that I'd like ter do ther job, too, so ther best way ter settle this is ter draw lots. That will be fair fur all hands, an' ther one what wins kin consider that he's goin' ter do some-thing that will be ther startin' of gittin' square on Young Wild West."

This proposition seemed to suit them all.

"How are we goin' ter draw lots?" asked Jake.

"We'll pull straws," was the reply.

"There ain't no straws here ter pull."

"Well, we'll use pieces of grass. Ther one what gits ther shortest piece will be ther one ter go."

The Terror picked five blades of grass and got them ready.

Then he held them so only one end of them was visible and the men drew.

Jake gave an exclamation of joy when he found he had been the one to draw the short one.

"It's all right," he said; "I'm ther galoot as will do ther business. I'll see if I can't git ther Injun free."

His brother then undertook to advise him as to what he should do, but Tombstone Tom interposed.

"Let him use his own jedgment," he said. "He won't know jest what he's goin' ter do till he gits there."

Five minutes later Jake left the camp and started on his mission.

It was pretty dark, but he had figured out the way to go and he crossed the ledge and made his way around the hill.

It was not long before he saw a lighted lantern, and then he knew he was approaching the camp of Young Wild West.

He moved with pretty good caution, for, in spite of what his brother had said, he was about the best one of the five to go on the mission.

Jake crept up to within a dozen yards of the camp.

He saw that Cheyenne Charlie was sitting close to a tree with his rifle across his knees.

He was keeping a watch.

The rest were sitting near the tents talking, and the Indian was reclining on the ground.

Jake knew he would take a risk in getting to him, but he had come there for that purpose and he meant to do it.

He paused for a minute and then began creeping around for the tree to which the redskin was bound.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE VILLAINS.

While the villain Jake was creeping up to liberate the Indian our friends were talking of what they were going to do when they got inside the cave.

It was not long before a shout went up from Charlie and then a pistol shot rang out.

Young Wild West sprang to his feet and was just in time to see the redskin free and bounding toward the cavern.

Grabbing up the lantern, he started after him.

Cheyenne Charlie had fired the shot, and it was Jake who got his medicine.

The villain had succeeded in cutting the redskin loose, and he had just raised his revolver to fire a shot at Wild when the scout saw him.

Charlie fired to kill, and he did not miss his mark.

He saved the life of Wild, probably, for Jake was close enough to send in a straight shot.

As Charlie saw our hero dart after the escaping redskin he decided to follow him.

He picked up his lariat and rifle and started after him.

Then Arietta suddenly made up her mind to go into the cavern.

There had been two lanterns lighted in the camp, and Wild had taken one of them.

She picked up the other and exclaimed:

"Jim, I am going with Wild and Charlie. Take care of the girls."

Jim heard her, but he was too intent on watching for more of the villains to appear to answer just then.

Jim, in fact, did not know that Wild and Charlie had gone into the cavern after the escaping redskin.

He expected that it was one of the rascals they had sent back that day who had liberated the Apache, and he felt certain that the rest of them would appear in short order.

But when a minute had passed and there was naught but silence, he took a look around the camp.

Ralph Cooley and the Chinaman were crouching behind a boulder, ready to fight, and the girls were not to be seen.

Then it occurred to Jim what Arietta had said:

It was dark in the camp now, but Jim could see the outlines of the three behind the boulder.

He was squatting behind a tree himself.

"Did Arietta go?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes; Misler Wild and Misler Charlie go, too," answered Hop.

"And your sweetheart and Mrs. Anna are in their tent,"

added the prospector. "I reckon Young Wild West don't mean ter let that galoot of a redskin git away."

"He won't if he can possibly help it," Jim replied.

But Jim felt a little bit uneasy.

He was sorry that Wild had not let the redskin go, for he felt that they were liable to be attacked at any moment by Tombstone Tom and his men.

Jim decided to take a look around and find out if there was anyone coming.

He crept over to the boulder and told the three what he was up to.

Then he made his way to the tent in which Anna and Eloise were.

"Girls," he whispered, "lie close to the ground, for if any firing is done you might get hit. The boulders in front of the tent will protect you if you lie down."

"All right, Jim," Eloise answered. "I am sorry Arietta went along with Wild and Charlie, though. I always feel safer when she is with us."

"Be very careful, Jim," Anna said.

"I will. You both have your shooters ready, I suppose?"

"Yes," came the reply.

The boy crept away from the camp and began to crawl around in a semicircle.

He had not gone far when, without the least warning, he was pounced upon by a man.

He was thrown flat on his stomach, while a hand was clapped over his mouth at the same time.

Jim had been caught!

The fact was that Tombstone Tom and the rest had hastened toward the camp the instant they heard the pistol shot and shout.

Somehow they had felt that Jake had gone under and they became desperate.

They had run all the way to within fifty feet of the darkened camp, and then they dropped to the ground and crawled up.

As luck would have it, Jim Dart crept right into the arms of Red Runyon.

The whole three of them soon had a hand in rendering Jim helpless.

Then they lifted him and carried him back a few yards and tied him to a tree, so he could not roll away.

Then back they crept to the camp.

Unfortunately Anna called out in a whisper just then, and as Cooley answered her question the villains received the information that there was no one there now but the prospector and the two Chinamen, besides the girls in the tent.

"We'll catch them galoots," Tombstone Tom whispered to his companions. "Hank, you kin change your voice; jest call out fur that galoot with ther wounded shoulder ter come here—that somethin's up, yer know."

"All right," answered Hank, and then in a shrill whisper he called out:

"Just come here an' foller me. I reckon we'll git them

galoots hard an' fast. Ther Chinamen kin stay right where they are till we come back."

Cooley was easily deceived, and as the Chinamen were badly frightened, they did not notice that it was not Jim's voice.

The prospector started for the spot the voice came from, and when he got there a revolver was placed under his nose.

"One little bit of a noise an' you're a goner!" Tombstone Tom hissed in his ear.

Cooley was unable to put up a fight on account of his wounded shoulder.

The villains had a lariat, so they soon had him bound and gagged, the same as Jim.

Then they dragged him back and tied him to another tree that was close to where Jim was.

"Now," said Tombstone Tom, with a chuckle, "Red, me an' you will walk right inter ther camp, jest as though we was these two fellers. We'll catch ther two heathen galoots in no time, an' then we'll only have ther gals ter fool with."

Leaving Hank in the background, they walked boldly into the camp.

"You findee baddee Melican mans, Misler Jim?" Hop asked, rising to his feet.

"I reckon we did," was the reply, and then they pounced upon both Hop and Wing and bore them to the earth.

They both let out a cry, though, and then Anna and Eloise came out of the tent, ready to fire.

"Come here, Hank!" called out the leader of the villains.

Hank came on a run.

Anna nerved herself and fired a shot.

But it went over the scoundrel's head, and the next minute she was seized and the weapon torn from her grasp.

Eloise was captured quite easily by Tombstone Tom, while Red Runyon took care of the Chinamen.

In less than five minutes all hands were prisoners.

But the three villains were worried for fear that Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie would appear.

They forced Wing to tell them where they had gone, and then the leader was struck with an idea.

"If we could only make that big rock fall over ag'in ther opening we'd have 'em!" he exclaimed. "They'd stay there an' starve to death. I reckon that would be revenge enough fur us."

"It sartinly would," replied Hank. "I wonder what they done ter Jake?"

While Tom and Red were trying to find a way to make the big rock topple over he went around in search of his brother.

He found him in short order right where he had dropped.

Jake was dead!

Then he flew into a rage and began to let out a string of oaths that were horrible to hear.

Tom had found another lantern and lighted it.

"They've gone in ther big cave after ther redskin," he said, "an' ther chances is that they'll be a good while catchin' him. We'll light this lantern an' try an' git ther rock over. Hurry up! We ain't got an awful lot of time ter spare."

It so happened that the rock was not much more than balanced in its position before the mouth of the cavern.

Cooley's prospecting tools came in handy, and they were soon digging on the inner side.

In less than ten minutes the rock gave a lurch.

Crash!

The rock jarred the ground as it fell over.

"There's what yer might call a livin' death fur them what's in there," he said with a chuckle. "Boys, we had hard luck first off, but our turn come after a while."

"If we hadn't lost two of our men it would be all right," answered Red Runyon.

A little later Jim and Cooley were brought to the camp and tied to trees.

Then the two girls felt slightly relieved.

They removed the gags from the mouths of the two captives and began questioning them about the money they had.

But our friends always carried most of their money in their saddle-bags, and Jim was not going to tell them that.

However, the scoundrels found as much as a couple of hundred dollars on the persons of Jim and the prospector and they felt that they were partly paid.

"We'll wait till daylight afore we fix you galoots," went on the leader, looking at Jim. "I reckon we'll hang yer, an' we want daylight ter do it in. Jest what we'll do with ther gals we ain't settled on yet, but yer kin bet that we'll use them all right. We'll make queens out of 'em, or somethin' like that, I reckon."

Just then the voices of Wild and Charlie were heard from the cavern.

"They have got us prisoners and have fastened you in there, Wild!" Jim called out loudly.

Then the scoundrels laughed mockingly.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Young Wild West was bent on catching the redskin, for he depended on him to show them what there was in the cavern that was being kept from them.

As the fellow had no light, he could not run as fast as Wild with the lantern and he rapidly gained upon him.

But when he darted into a passage and fled through the darkness Wild knew he stood a good chance of hiding somewhere.

However, he darted into the passage after him, followed by Charlie and Arietta.

Our hero could hear the footsteps of the escaped redskin and he kept on, holding the lantern so he could see his way.

But suddenly the footsteps ceased.

Wild ran on a few steps and then halted and waited for the scout and Arietta to come up.

"Have yer lost him?" asked Charlie.

"Yes," answered the dashing young deadshot.

"Wild, didn't Cooley say that all the passages in the cavern led to the underground stream?" Arietta asked.

"That's so! Come on! We'll keep right on ahead and see where we fetch out at."

The three now ran on and in a very few minutes the sound made by rushing water came to their ears.

Arietta's eyes brightened.

"It is the underground stream!" she exclaimed. "I am confident that it is going to be the means of something wonderful happening."

The next minute they were standing on the bank of the dark rushing stream, where the passage ended.

The other passages, something like half a dozen in number, all merged into one right there.

But there were no signs of the Indian.

"Wild, I am satisfied that this underground stream is going to bring us great luck."

"In what way, little one?"

"That I can't say. But it will—see if it don't!"

"Well, I hope it does, but let us find the redskin. He is the fellow who can give us some information about it."

"I think the redskin will come here if we wait," said Arietta. "He may have got lost in the dark."

Wild thought they had surely lost him, and he was now for going back to see how they were making out at the camp.

It was just then they heard footsteps coming their way.

The next minute a form loomed up before them.

It was the Indian, sure enough.

"No shoot!" he exclaimed, holding up his hands. "Red Snake is now a friend to the palefaces. We can no get out of the cavern by the way we came in!"

They questioned the redskin closely and he told them that he had been in hiding in one of the passages until a few minutes ago, when he went back to the entrance, having decided to surrender and tell the secret of the underground stream.

Then, he said, he found that the big rock had fallen against the opening, and that it was impossible to get out that way.

Young Wild West felt that the redskin was telling the truth.

"We will go back and see," he said.

They soon reached the closed entrance and found that what the Apache had said was true.

Then it was that Wild and Charlie shouted to their friends on the outside.

The reply they received from Jim Dart and the hoarse laugh of the three villains told them plainly that they were caught in a trap.

"Come!" said the Apache, speaking in a solemn voice; "there is one way to get out—the underground stream!"

Red Snake led the way to the brink of the roaring, black waters in silence.

He stood looking at the water for a moment, and then, after making some mysterious crosses on his breast and forehead, he turned to Wild and said:

"Give me rope; me jump in water. Then you jump in and me pull you up in the gold cave of the Apaches. Then you go with me to your camp from the outside and make your friends free from bad men."

"All right. Give me the lariat, Et."

Charlie stood in the mouth of the passage, with the pick he had found at the mouth of the sealed entrance over his shoulder.

Arietta held the lantern she had seized when she started after her lover and the scout.

Wild put the lantern on the ground, and as he made a loop around a point of rock the lantern was knocked over and it was whisked out of sight by the turbulent stream.

But they still had a lantern, so it was all right.

Red Snake took hold of the other end of the lariat.

"When rope get tight you come," he said to Wild.

Then the Indian unhesitatingly leaped into the water.

Instantly he was swallowed up and then——

A sharp jerk came on the lariat and it slipped from the rock and went after him.

"That's too bad!" said Wild.

Then he called out:

"Hello, Red Snake!"

"Paleface boy jump in! I catch him!" came the faint reply half a minute later.

"Oh, Wild!" said Arietta; "you are not going to make that leap in the dark, are you?"

"It has got to be done!" cried Wild, nerving himself for the jump. "I don't know where I'll fetch up, but here goes!"

Arietta uttered a scream as the young deadshot made his leap in the dark.

Splash! Down he went and then he felt himself being whirled along like a cork in a mill-race.

By a desperate effort he struggled to the surface, and then——

Bump! He came in contact with a rocky ledge.

He caught hold of the rock, and then it was that a pair of hands seized him.

"Right up here, Young Wild West!" came the voice of the Indian to his ears, and the next minute Wild was upon the rock.

It was dark where he was, but when he heard Red Snake whisper for him to come on, and felt a revolver that was perfectly dry thrust into his hand, he unhesitatingly did so.

"This way!" exclaimed Red Snake. "Tombstone Tom said I must starve to death with you, so I am no longer his friend!"

Right along the rocks that formed the roof of the cavern they went and the next minute Wild was looking upon the camp below.

The three villains were seated near the lantern they had lighted and appeared to be in the best of moods.

Wild saw there was a way to get down.

Without waiting another second, he dashed down and stood before them.

"Hands up!" he cried in ringing tones.

But, instead of obeying, the villains reached for their revolvers.

Crack, crack, crack!

There was no alternative, so Young Wild West fired three times in quick succession. Tombstone Tom and his followers were wiped out forever.

Then the work of getting an opening at one side of the rock was begun as soon as the prisoners were liberated.

Charlie and Arietta had come to the entrance and were waiting to get out, the scout working with his pick on the inside.

When they were liberated there was a general rejoicing.

Red Snake appeared to be sad, but after an hour of silence he turned to Wild and said:

"There is gold in the cave; go and get it. Me go back to reservation and be good Injun."

The next morning they all paid a visit to the cave near the underground stream and they found that the Indian had spoken the truth.

Red Snake explained that he had regarded the cave as a sacred one, because it had been discovered ages before by his forefathers, and that he and the brave who had been killed by Cooley were the only ones who knew of its existence.

It was easy to understand now how it was that he had jumped into the underground stream and then come out alive.

All one had to do was to grasp the rock and haul themselves out as they were whirled toward the place where the water was sucked down into the bowels of the earth.

The gold amounted to several thousand dollars in value, and when Wild insisted that the Indian take his share he did so.

The next day they all went back to the mining camp known as Hard Scratch, and there they told their story.

This ends the story of "Young Wild West's Leap in the Dark; or, Arietta and the Underground Stream."

THE END.

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